



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 129 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 29, 2012
(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 29, 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 21 petitions.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, the remainder of the debate, pursuant to Standing Order 66, on the motion to concur in the First Report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, presented on Wednesday, October 19, 2011, be deemed to have taken place and the motion be deemed agreed to on division.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

On a point of order, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to block this motion and I wish to give my consent, but I want to register that I am very unhappy that although I tried to speak to this issue, there just was not time in debate. However, I do not want to hold up the House, so I will consent.

The Speaker: Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House for this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by hundreds of Winnipeg residents who call upon the House of Commons to take note that as Canadians they are appalled by reports that Canadian mining, gas and oil companies are involved in human rights and environmental violations around the world. They are particularly embarrassed by the Canadian government's lack of action against such violations in the eastern Congo.

The petitioners argue that the standards for Canadian extractive companies are much less stringent outside of Canada than in Canada, which is a policy that disadvantages people who are already poor and under-represented with their own governments.

Therefore, the petitioners request that the House of Commons legislate that the standards for Canadian mining companies operating outside of Canada be the same as the standards they much reach when operating inside of Canada, which would include requiring the corporate social responsibility review process to be mandatory, not voluntary, and that Bill C-300 be reinvigorated to hold Canadian extractive companies to the standards of decency that Canadians expect of their government and of companies carrying the Canadian flag.

I am proud to table this petition on behalf of the constituents in my riding.

Routine Proceedings

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by people from all over Canada who are concerned with the proposed megaquarry in Melancthon Township in Dufferin County. At over 2,300 acres, this quarry would be the largest open-pit quarry in Canada.

The petitioners are concerned with a great number of things. I will not list them all, but they are concerned that the megaquarry would delve more than 60 metres deep, which is more than 200 feet. It is well below the water table.

The petitioners ask that the Government of Canada conduct an environmental assessment under the authority of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on the proposed Highland Companies' megaquarry development.

[Translation]

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions on behalf of my constituents in Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

The first petition calls on Parliament to amend section 223 of the Criminal Code so as to reflect 21st century medical evidence.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the government to withdraw Bill C-31 because it is not fair to all refugees. It restricts appeals and gives too much discretion to the minister.

ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to present this petition signed by my constituents, specifically those from Morin Heights.

The petition calls upon the government to declare May the month of awareness and education on environmental sensitivities and May 12 the environmental sensitivity day in Canada.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise to present a petition from my constituents of Okanagan—Shuswap.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to adopt legislation to recognize suicide as a public health issue. They are asking Parliament to provide guidelines for suicide prevention, promote collaborative and knowledge exchange regarding suicide, promote evidence-based solutions and define best practices for the prevention of suicide.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by 10,000 Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This petition has to do with the tragic death of Burton Winters in Labrador, something with which we are all familiar.

The petitioners call upon the federal government to commit to full-time and fully operational search and rescue services to be placed in Labrador.

Those of us who are familiar with Labrador know only too well the difficult terrain and the circumstances under which people can sometimes get lost. The reality is that this tragedy should never have happened. If search and rescue services were on the ground, if they had responded in the manner in which they should have responded, everyone who has signed this petition, all 10,000 people, fully believe that Burton Winters would be alive today.

The petitioners call upon the federal government to commit to full-time, fully operational search and rescue services in Labrador.

● (1010)

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a petition from a number of constituents who are calling on the government to end poverty among seniors.

Almost a year ago in the House I presented a motion calling on the government to improve guaranteed income supplement benefits so that seniors could be lifted out of poverty. Here we are a year later, and the government has done nothing but give us bogus pension plans and a threat to reduce the old age security—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. The hon. Chief Government Whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. People presenting petitions are not supposed to advocate for them and they are not supposed to comment on them. They are just supposed to read them.

The Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands rising on the same point of order?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Yes, Madam Speaker. I just want to make sure I understand the rules clearly and what the hon. government whip has said.

I understand that we are not supposed to read petitions and that we are supposed to summarize them. I agree we are not supposed to make long speeches about them. I do not believe it is appropriate to read petitions.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank hon. members for their comments. Just to clarify, it is quite accurate that petitions should not be read verbatim. They should be summarized. The exercise is not to indicate either support or opposition, but simply to represent petitioners' ideas.

I would ask the hon. member for London—Fanshawe to complete her petition so that others can speak.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I will summarize the wishes of the people of Canada.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to make the appropriate investments in guaranteed income supplement to lift every senior out of poverty.

POVERTY

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to present a petition signed by a number of residents of my riding.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to ensure the swift passage of Bill C-233, an act to eliminate poverty in Canada and develop and implement a strategy for poverty elimination.

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, the signatures keep flooding in. Once again today, I am very pleased to table in the House two stacks of petitions from FRAPRU. One is from Winnipeg and the other from places all over Quebec. These are to be added to the 27,000 other petitions that have already been submitted.

It is therefore becoming ever clearer that Canadians are calling on the federal government to provide sufficient funding to renovate, upgrade and modernize all social housing units and to continue to fund the subsidies that mean that low-income tenants do not have to choose between paying the rent and paying to put food on the table.

[English]

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I will attempt to live up to my interpretation of the rules.

I am presenting petitions from residents of Halifax and Kingston. The first petition calls upon the government to take note of the reports of electoral fraud in the 2011 federal election and to appoint an independent inquiry to get to the bottom of the situation.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the second petition I am presenting is primarily from residents of Toronto. It speaks to an issue that I know concerns members on all sides of the House, which is the ongoing question of human rights in China. Specifically, petitioners wish to see the Government of Canada speak clearly to the People's Republic of China about our concern, shared on both sides of the House, for the fate of people practising Falun Dafa.

I would also add we are also concerned for the fate of people in Tibet and for practising Christians in China.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

PROTECTING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION SYSTEM ACT

BILL C-31—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That in relation to Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act, the Marine Transportation Security Act and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Act, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and one sitting day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the said bill and, fifteen minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government business on the day allotted to the consideration of the report stage;

and on the day allotted to the third 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 stage of the bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment.

• (1015)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite all hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so that the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in the question period.

As is the custom, as Chair I will give preference to opposition members, although I will recognize some government members.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, to help translate what you just read into the record, this is a time allocation. This is another effort by a government seemingly pathologically addicted to shutting down debate. It is closing off debate into the investigation of the F-35 fiasco. Later this afternoon we will likely see closure from the government on the union-busting tactics with respect to the CP Rail strike.

[Translation]

The government must justify why it is panicking and once again using such a brutal tool.

Is the economy in such a state that the government has to panic and pass such a bill?

[English]

I understand from previous experience that the government will not be moved by the words of the opposition or the words of the Canadian public who wonder why the government has grown so addicted to using measures like this one, more time allocation at all stages, in committee for any study, for any conversation and consultation with Canadians about critical legislation that will not just have an effect in the moment, but maybe even for a generation to come.

Therefore, I will use the words of the Prime Minister when he used to have principles with respect to this brutal tool:

Government Orders

We have closure today precisely because there is no deadline and there are no plans. Instead of having deadlines, plans and goals, we must insist on moving forward because the government is simply increasingly embarrassed by the state of the debate and it needs to move on.

We see it with respect to the government's so-called budget implementation act and the pipeline implementation act. We see it with respect to the investigation that we are attempting on behalf of Canadians on the F-35 purchase, which is increasingly a sordid series of mis-truths, half-truths and outright lies. The government needs to justify the use of this particular and most brutal form on our democratic values and on the ability of members of Parliament from all sides to do their jobs.

Can the government justify, in any measure, why today it is again shutting down debate, again shutting the door on Canadians and not listening to the democratic will of Canadians and allowing free and fair debate like the Conservative Party used to believe in before it came into power?

• (1020)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can. In fact, there is a very clear and compelling deadline that we are rapidly approaching which requires the rapid adoption of Bill C-31, the protecting Canada's immigration system act.

In the last Parliament, the 40th Parliament, this place adopted then Bill C-11, the balanced refugee reform act, that included major revisions to Canada's asylum system which are scheduled to come into force by June 29, 2012.

Since that time, we have seen the growing problem of both human smuggling and a large and growing wave of unfounded asylum claims particularly coming from the European Union. Therefore, we have concluded that it is necessary to strengthen the asylum reforms and adopt measures to combat human smuggling. That is why we have had to delay the coming into force of the balanced refugee reform act from the last Parliament. To be blunt, we are not in a position to implement the new system contemplated in Bill C-11 in the 40th Parliament. If we do not adopt this legislation, if it does not receive royal assent by June 29 of this year, a new law will come into effect that the appropriate administrative agencies, such as the IRB, are not yet ready to put in place.

I would point out to my hon. colleague that this bill has received 13 days of debate, 47.5 hours of debate and 130 speeches at second reading and report stage. It had 15 committee meetings with over 43 hours of committee study and 109 witnesses. It was preceded in a previous Parliament by Bill C-49, which had many similar provisions including 3 days of debate, 10 hours of debate and 30 speeches.

In fact, this bill and most of its provisions have received an enormous amount of debate and consideration both in this place and at committee. There is a deadline with a great deal of urgency that we adopt this by June 29.

The Deputy Speaker: Because I saw quite a number of members rise, I would ask the hon. members to make their questions and the minister's responses brief.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to the minister with great interest as he tried to justify why yet again the government is bringing in draconian time allocation motions, stifling debate in this House.

If the Conservatives were interested in allowing more debate, they could save some House time by not bringing in bills like back-to-work legislation for the striking workers at CP. There are other ways that we could use valuable House time rather than denying people the basic right of free collective bargaining.

When the minister said that 130 members have participated in the debate, I wonder whether he could tell this House why he feels it is okay that the voices of the constituents represented by the 170 members in the House do not get to be heard on an issue that is of great concern to all Canadians and frankly an issue where the minister himself has benefited from extra time as he has had to amend his own bill because it was so flawed in the first instance. Debate in the House allows for that kind of reflection and for improvements to legislation. I would encourage the minister to continue to take advantage of that.

Hon. Jason Kenney: I would honestly submit, Madam Speaker, that we have just heard the reason why occasionally provisions must be used to limit debate on bills in the House. The position of the hon. member opposite appears to be that every one of the 308 members should speak on every bill. I am not aware of a single Parliament in the democratic world where that is the normal practice because then nothing would ever get done. What she is really saying is that the rules should allow for endless filibusters.

Let me be clear. I have been around this place for 15 years. This has, by any measure, received an extraordinary amount of debate, far more than normal for even contentious bills: 13 days of debate at second reading and report stage, 47.5 hours, 130 speeches and enormous lengthy consideration at committee. The government accepted amendments put forward by the opposition, demonstrating its good faith. What opposition members are really saying is not that they think this is a pre-emptory imposition of time allocation but, rather, they oppose the bill and never want to allow it to come to a vote because they know that the will of Canadians will be reflected in a vote adopting these sensible measures to rebalance our broken asylum system.

We have a commitment to Canadians to keep our word, to fix the broken asylum system and to combat human smuggling, and that is what we will do.

Government Orders

•(1025)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for his clarifications. We are all well aware that the bill has a time limit stemming from legislation passed in the previous Parliament. I would like to ask why time allocation in this instance must be rushed to such an extent that we will not have a proper discussion in this place of amendments that are now properly before the House. There should be the opportunity for members to speak to their own amendments in relation to Bill C-31.

I want to thank the hon. minister for being more flexible and willing to take on changes to this legislation and other legislation in the 41st Parliament, but there is more that should be done on this bill before we are finished with it.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's evident concern and the fact that she takes the deliberative legislative process very seriously.

I would submit to her that there is a deadline of June 29. There has been an enormous amount of debate. To address her question, the reason why there will be more limited debate on report stage for consideration of amendments in this place is, I would argue, because there was so much debate at second reading and so much consideration at committee, which had 15 meetings, over 43 hours of study, heard from 109 witnesses and considered dozens of amendments.

I know the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is at a disadvantage because, as an independent member, she does not have a seat on committees. For her that is an unfortunate reality of the rules of this place. I can assure her that many of the amendments that she intends to propose at report stage were considered by the committee following its exhaustive study clause by clause. These ideas have been given full consideration.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Madam Speaker, the minister mentioned that a similar bill was studied in a previous Parliament. There was agreement among the parties that the bill would have been passed quickly had it been introduced in the same Parliament.

However, this is not the first time we have been told that it is urgent that we pass a bill quickly. Nevertheless, if the government knew this, and it controls the agenda, why did the government not make this bill a priority so that we could debate it fully and in its entirety? Why was this bill not given more priority?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, that is a reasonable question. The government did give priority to Bill C-31. Since the bill was introduced in the House, we have spent more hours debating this bill than almost any other bill. We made it a priority to send the bill to committee.

As I just mentioned, the bill has been debated for 13 days or 47.5 hours. Members have given 130 speeches on this matter, which is a lot. There have also been questions and comments after almost every speech. The bill was studied in detail in committee.

I must point out that the government made the substantial amendments suggested by the committee. The government agreed to the amendments proposed by the opposition.

Quite frankly, I believe that this is an example of a process that works very well when it comes to the proceedings and the opposition interests.

•(1030)

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, time allocation is a practice of the government no matter what the legislation. Every time I hear it being introduced I have to wonder what exactly the government is trying to hide.

Clearly, MPs have questions with respect to this particular piece of legislation. We are here representing constituents. We are here representing their concerns. How is it the government can determine how much time is sufficient when we have questions of importance that need to be answered? Here we go again with time allocation on a piece of legislation that is of crucial importance to this country, and yet the government is introducing time allocation, preventing MPs from expressing the views of their constituents in the manner in which we have been asked to do.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, that question is just complete nonsense. The reality is that every member has had an opportunity to speak repeatedly on this bill. First of all, many of the elements of Bill C-31 were debated in the previous Parliament under the heading of Bill C-49. Second, in the earlier part of this Parliament most of the provisions of the bill were debated in the form of Bill C-4.

Altogether in this Parliament there have been 47.5 hours of debate, 130 speeches, meaning 130 MPs have spoken to the bill, and 43 hours of committee study. If there are any questions that have not been posed, or any views that have not been expressed during those almost 50 hours of House debate and over 40 hours of committee debate, I would really like to know what they are. I do not know who has been asleep at the switch.

I can say that I have followed this debate very closely. I have been in the House for almost every single hour of debate, and I do not hear new questions or new points of view. I just hear the same speeches being regurgitated over and over again. Eventually we must act in order to meet the deadline of June 29 and to keep our commitment to Canadians to fix the broken asylum system.

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, several NDP MPs, including the past NDP immigration critic and the current NDP immigration critic, have said they support the goals of this bill which include providing protection more quickly to genuine refugees while allowing us to remove criminals and bogus refugees much faster.

Can the minister please tell the House why he thinks the NDP has chosen to oppose a bill that would lead to a faster and fairer refugee system, and which includes reforms that the NDP members themselves agree are much needed?

Government Orders

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I cannot guess the motives of the NDP. I can however draw certain inferences about the motives of the Liberal Party. In 2002 when the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act was brought into effect it included a provision to create a refugee appeal division at the Immigration and Refugee Board. Failed claimants would have a fact-based appeal on a rejected claim. The Liberals then refused to bring that appeal into force. In 2002-2006 they refused to bring it into effect to add that additional procedural safeguard for failed asylum claimants.

This bill brings in the refugee appeal division, a full fact-based appeal for failed asylum claimants, so I know why the Liberals are opposed to this. They have always been against the creation of a refugee appeal division, and that is why they are holding up its implementation. That is why they want to filibuster this. They do not want the appeal division that they refused to put in place when they had the chance in government.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, it was just this morning that I received more emails in my mail pouch dealing with the issue of Bill C-31 and the concerns—

An hon. member: He is a marsupial.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: That is the green book parliamentarians have for their mail. It is a very useful device, no doubt.

This issue is not dead in the population. The minister has agreed that the bill he first presented needed amendments. All the amendments that have been proposed have not been accepted. We are still in a position where there is great concern about the bill.

The minister has brought two arguments forward. He says we have had enough debate, but at the same time he says he has a deadline. I would really like to understand from the minister if his real motive is the deadline, or if his motive is that he has heard too much on the bill and just simply wants to get it done.

•(1035)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, the real motive is the deadline. I am all for fulsome debate, but we need a clear and serious deadline.

I will explain the consequences to people. If this bill does not receive royal assent by June 29, we will have a disaster because a system will come into effect that the administrative agencies, like the Immigration and Refugee Board and the Canada Border Services Agency, are not in a position to implement. People will be coming into a new legal system that is not supported operationally or with regulations or with staff. We will have a complete train wreck in our asylum system.

I was in opposition for nine years, so I know opposition members have a very important duty to hold the government to account, to criticize legislation and to always want more rather than less debate, which is understandable and commendable, but sometimes opposition parties need to act responsibly, too. Sometimes they need to look at reality.

The reality is that we need to get this bill adopted by June 29 to avoid a train wreck. The reality is that this has had fulsome debate and opposition amendments have been considered. What we are really hearing here today is that so many of the objections about time

allocation are actually because the opposition wants to have endless filibusters which the rules of other Parliaments do not permit by always limiting the number of speeches. We have had 100 and—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to allow other members to speak.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister has a problem with reality. The reality is that the government has again moved time allocation which prevents individuals from being able to participate.

This is not the first bill. We are talking about 20-plus bills. The government does not respect the need to have legitimate debate. That minister brought in fraud legislation that made detention mandatory for at least 12 months. It was because of due diligence by the opposition that we were able to get the minister to back down and make the change that took that 12 month detention down to 14 days in terms of judicial overview.

The responsibility of opposition members is to hold the minister and other ministers accountable for the mistakes that they make. The minister is great at spin. He likes to talk and is critical of the Liberal Party. The minister has to take responsibility for his actions but he has a difficult time doing that. That includes issues such as this bill and that includes issues such as the backlogs. He is the minister who has caused the problem—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I am concerned for the hon. member opposite. His volume knob seems to be broken. I would submit that when he speaks about reasonable debate, we just saw an example of what is not reasonable debate.

That member sat on the committee, which heard from 109 witnesses over 43 hours in 15 committee meetings. He knows that I have been present in this House for most of the 130 speeches over nearly 50 hours of debate at second reading and report stage.

I know that member was never part of one of the Liberal governments but had he been he would have realized that time allocation was used much earlier on many bills than is the case on this—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: That is a lie. That is a lie.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I will invite the member to retract that statement.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but I did not hear the comment that was made. Is that a point of order that the minister is raising?

•(1040)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, the member knows he just uttered an unparliamentary expression.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The minister was rising on a point of order. I would like to allow him to complete his comments and then I will recognize the member.

Government Orders

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, the member used a heckle on three occasions that was clearly unparliamentary, and I would invite him to retract it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is the reason I stood up. I understand that the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism was offended by language I had used in heckling him. I would like to withdraw the word that I used. It was indeed unparliamentary and I will just leave it at that.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member.

At this point I will recognize another member for questions and comments. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by expressing how grateful I am to the government for allowing us to debate this bill for 13 days. Indeed, we have here a budget implementation bill that amends roughly 70 Canadian laws in 430 pages, and we debated it for only one week. I understand that to the government, 13 days is a long debate.

The minister was talking about a filibuster. Apparently we had a filibuster during consideration of Bill C-31. I would like to know his definition of filibuster. Indeed, to him, holding a democratic debate in the House, listening to public opinion and studying bills are part and parcel of a filibuster.

I would like the minister to rise and explain to us the meaning of filibuster and the difference between a filibuster and a democratic debate on amendments he made to his bill.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. A filibuster is a parliamentary tactic that seeks to delay or prevent a vote on a motion by means of endless debates.

We just heard the hon. opposition member say that she believes that every member should speak to the bill at every stage. If that applied to every bill, then it would be impossible for Parliament to take action, to make decisions and to get anything done.

In a parliamentary context, we have to find a balance between democratic debates, deliberations, consideration of changes and actions. I believe we have found a good balance with, as I was saying, more than 130 speeches, almost 50 hours of debate and the adoption by the government of the motions moved by the opposition.

At the end of the day, our deadline is June 29 and we have to fix the problems with our asylum system, which is the purpose of Bill C-31.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Madam Speaker, countless people choose to pay criminal human smugglers tens of thousands of dollars to come to countries, including Canada, because they can afford to try to jump the queue instead of waiting in line like everyone else.

As was the case in Nova Scotia, these trips often end in deadly tragedies.

Bill C-31 includes measures to deter people from becoming part of a human smuggling event. Shamefully, the NDP and the Liberals are against these measures.

Would the minister please comment on why he thinks the opposition is opposed to measures to crack down on criminal human smuggling events?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, it is an interesting question. I, frankly, have not been able to figure this out.

By the way, according to the polling and all of the research, Canadians across the partisan spectrum, across the geographic spectrum, have said loud and clear that they expect Parliament to act to deter human smugglers from targeting Canada. That is what the bill seeks to do.

We cannot deter human smugglers unless we also deter their would-be customers from paying criminal networks to come to Canada illegally. That is what the bill seeks to do.

Having studied the practices in other democratic countries to see what works and what does not, having consulted with our police and intelligence agencies, we have constructed a bill that we believe would be effective in deterring smuggling networks from targeting Canada.

My invitation, consistently, to the opposition parties has been that if they do not like our proposed remedy we want to know what their's is. We have had none. All of the motions we have heard from the opposition have sought to gut the most effective measures to deter human smugglers, from which I infer that they do not agree with Canadians that we should actually take firm action to combat human smuggling. I think the opposition—

• (1045)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Mount Royal a last brief question.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I regret that we are once again having to debate the issue of time allocation because, to me, the real and significant issue is whether the bill is properly before this House to begin with. I say that because the government has a responsibility under section 4.1 of the Department of Justice Act to examine any prospective legislation in order to determine whether it comports with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to report any inconsistency to the House at the first convenient opportunity.

Experts have said that this legislation is “littered with charter violations” and the government itself had to repeal one of the provisions regarding warrantless and unreviewable mandatory detention since it probably began to appreciate that was the case.

How could this bill have been introduced with that provision to begin with? Did the government ever examine the constitutionality of this legislation and whether it comported with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? When will it report to the House at the first available opportunity the results of such an examination and whether it indeed is consistent with the charter?

Government Orders

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, of course such an analysis was done. On legal advice received, the government has always been of the view that this bill complies with the charter and that it is a reasonable effort to achieve a necessary public policy objective, which is to deter human smugglers from targeting Canada.

With respect to detention, I will just get this on the record, as there has been a lot of misunderstanding about it. Immigration detention is not imprisonment. It allows detainees to leave Canada at any time they choose. Most of the migrants who have come here through smuggling networks have passed through and, therefore, have visas for several countries to which they could freely return.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 228*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreesen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)

Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Golding
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komamicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poillievre
Preston	Raïtt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	
Williamson	Wilks
Young (Oakville)	Yelich
Zimmer— 157	Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Ayala
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau

Easter
Fortin
Fry
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Savoie
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valériote— 125

Footé
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Jacob
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
Marston
Masse
May
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray
Nash
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[English]

POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT

Hon. Ted Menzies (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-25, An Act relating to pooled registered pension plans and making related amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to speak to third reading of the pooled registered pension plans legislation in front of the House. This is not my first time speaking to this bill and I am glad it is moving through the House. It could have gone a little faster than it has, but I appreciate this opportunity.

I want to talk a bit about the pension system in Canada to begin with, about the role this pooled registered pension plans act would play within that system and then about the different aspects of the pooled registered pension plan that are important and why I think everybody in the House should support it.

I will first talk about pension plan retirement savings for Canadians overall. There are a number of vehicles that already exist. There are company pensions and, as many of us know, only about 40% of Canadians have a company pension plan that they can

Government Orders

rely on and that they and their company pay into. They vary from company to company to what level they are contributing, but that is part of the pension savings program that many working Canadians have.

Of course there is CPP, which I will come back to later in my dissertation this morning. CPP is a pension plan that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

There is too much noise in the House. I would ask members to take their conversations to their individual lobbies and allow the hon. member for Burlington the opportunity to speak.

The hon. member for Burlington.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, part of the problem is that we have been dealing with this legislation for so long. If things would move faster around here we could get through this. People tend to talk about other issues because there are other things happening here today. However, this is an important piece.

I am going to come back to the CPP, but it is a program where the employer and the employee pay in, and it goes to a Canadian pension program savings board that looks after the savings that go into that program. It does the investments. It invests in the stock market, which for some reason the opposition members in previous speeches indicated they did not realize. It invests in government bonds and in the stock market. It is a relatively safe investment portfolio. There is always risk in everything one invests in and even during the recession the board's numbers went down, but overall it is a very secure, well-managed program. It is part of the savings program. Of course, one has to be an employee; one has to work to qualify for CPP because it is an investment piece.

A third piece is the registered retirement savings plans, which have been around for about 40 years or so, maybe a little longer. I believe they were introduced in the early 1960s. It is a program that is voluntary, which maybe the Liberal Party will want to talk about a bit. It is a voluntary program and does not have full take-up. Even in my own investment plans, I have not used all of the room available in my RRSP. There is still room for me to invest. However, it is a savings tool. I want to come back to that. It is a savings option. It is a savings tool for people to save for their retirement. There are RRSPs that are a lot more aggressive than others. It depends on one's level of tolerance for risk. That is why the vast majority of people have some sort of financial advice, whether through a bank or through an independent organization, on where they should invest their RRSP money, their savings, to help them in their retirement years.

We have made some changes to the RRSP system to allow for people to invest for longer. Then when people come out of the RRSP it turns into an annuity so they can have an income stream, hopefully, for the rest of their life.

Government Orders

We have also introduced a new savings tool, which is very popular. Even my own 21-year-old daughter has invested in it. It is a tax free savings account, which did not exist before our government took office. It is another savings tool where people can save money for retirement, and for other things, but it is also a retirement option where people save their money and hopefully it grows through the investments they choose for their TFSA. That growth is tax free. There is no tax on the money when they take it out. Therefore, if it is needed in the short term it can be used. A lot of people are considering the TFSA option as part of their retirement plan options.

Of course, there are other savings vehicles, like straight savings and a number of other options that are available to most people. However, there is something missing for many of those who are working, whose employer does not have a registered retirement savings plan that they are involved with or a pension plan. There is nothing for them. If people are self-employed, there is really nothing for them.

Our Minister of State for Finance has done an excellent job of consulting with the provinces and all Canadians on the pension system over the last number of years. In fact, the government is so concerned about the pension system in our country, and the retirement savings and ability of senior Canadians to have a quality of life after retirement, that we have a minister of state for finance, which did not exist before, to deal almost exclusively with the pension issue and seniors issue. This is a worldwide issue, but in the context of Canada we have taken it very seriously and added a cabinet position. This is a position at the table at cabinet to deal specifically with this issue.

The pooled registered pension plan has a number of components. There is a bit of a gap of course in terms of the retirement piece, even though I have listed out all the options that are available. I want to talk about that gap.

● (1135)

One of the pieces is that it is accessible and straightforward, and it is a low-cost option. I will get into why that is important. It allows for individuals who currently do not participate in a pension plan, whether they are self-employed or employees of companies that do not have pension plans, to get involved in a registered pension plan. The key is that it is an opt-out plan and not an opt-in plan. This is very important, and it is different from what has been suggested by other parties.

More people will benefit from its low-cost investment management, which will result in better returns. Whether it is an RRSP or other investments, part of the cost of the investment goes against what one would have in one's retirement. If we can lower the costs, which the pooled registered plan would do, it would mean more money in the pockets of the retirees.

Another very important component is its portability. A pooled registered pension plan is portable. If a person leaves one company to go to another, that person could take the retirement savings in the plan and either move it to a new plan that the new employer has or just keep it in the existing plan. It would be the employee's decision, but it is portable. I have left jobs before, and the money that was invested in my pension plan had to be either put into a locked-in RRSP or taken in cash.

Let us face it: in today's marketplace, my generation and generations after mine are not staying at the same company for 35 or 40 years. We are changing jobs every four or five years. My university friends have all had four or five careers in the 30 years since we graduated from university. I hate to say it, but it has been approximately 30 years, which is hard to believe. I was only 12 when I graduated.

However, we have all moved, and the portability of this new program is very important. The investment in the funds would be there for those who have invested in it.

There is a company whose management I know very well. I will use it as an example of why this important, and I will start with the automatic enrolment piece.

This company is in the high-tech medical business. It is very high end. There are about 30 employees in the company, and about half of them have a Ph.D. in chemistry. They are highly intellectual, highly skilled individuals.

This company has a group RRSP program. The employer adds a certain percentage—up to 5% or 6%, I think—of whatever the employee puts in the plan. I talked to the owner and asked how it was going. He said that he had all of these highly skilled, highly educated individuals, but only 30% of the 30 people take advantage of the company's money. They are not investing on their own, even though there is an automatic 5% return in that system.

That is an example of what happens across the country in company after company. Canadians often have an opportunity but do not take advantage of it. However, the advantage of the pooled registered pension plan, in my view, is that there is an automatic enrolment.

● (1140)

That means that when people join a company that has taken advantage of the pooled registered pension plan, they have, I think, three months or six months—off the top of my head, I cannot remember the timeframe—to decide not to be part of the program. Otherwise, they are automatically enrolled, which in my view makes a big difference.

We often hear the opposition asking why we do not just increase the CPP role. There is no doubt that the advantage of the CPP is automatic enrolment, but this plan takes the positive aspect of the CPP and adds to it.

There are two fundamental differences between the CPP and this plan. First, as we all know, we can talk to ourselves until we convince ourselves, but we need two-thirds of the provinces with two-thirds of the population to agree to make changes to the CPP. That is the law. We can see if we can change the law, but that is the law that runs the CPP program.

The Minister of State (Finance) has worked very hard at discussing what options are available that the provinces will buy into in terms of changes. The response has been that some provinces are in favour and some are not, so we cannot proceed with CPP changes.

Government Orders

The official opposition has said that we should just change the CPP and have the employers and employees pay more. Of course it will take 18 to 20 years before anyone sees the benefit of that, but it is an option, and we have discussed that option with the premiers of the provinces. It is just not feasible, because they are not interested. Maybe we should just stand up for it and say so, but we like to take action on this side of the House. We like to make a difference in people's lives.

When the previous leader, who has unfortunately passed away, was at the kitchen table, as he used to say, he was doing things and making things happen for Canadians. This is making things happen for Canadians. Is it the final answer on all the pension requirements for our future generations of seniors? Absolutely not. We are not saying it is the only or the final answer, but it is part of the puzzle and part of the options.

As I listed from the beginning, there are four or five options that exist now. We are adding another one. We are adding an opportunity for Canadians to invest and to save for their future and their retirement. The automatic enrolment is a key element of making sure that in this registered system, Canadians will have to choose not to save for their retirement. In this case, with this plan, we are requiring them to do so. That is why I think there will be a huge take-up on this program.

Even with this program, we can put the legislation into effect for nationally regulated industries, but we need the provinces on board too. We need each province to pass legislation so that they can recognize these pooled registered pension plans for employees at the provincial level, which we have no influence over.

I am hearing that the vast majority of provinces are interested in doing this. They were supportive. Unfortunately, Ontario has now indicated that it is not interested. I do not think it is good for Ontarians if the province takes its ball home because it does not want to play.

I am from Burlington, Ontario, and as a member of the Ontario caucus here, I want to see Ontario take advantage of this plan. It is of no cost to the province. It is an opportunity for the people of Ontario, as it is for every province. I think the province is being very short-sighted by not taking advantage of this plan. Ontario will say that it is not the final solution, and I agree with that. It is not the final solution. It is part of the puzzle of opportunity and options that should be available to all Canadians, regardless of what province they live in.

The portability piece is very key to me. I had asked the minister and his team about that. What if employees are moving around? It is portable. My concern is that if we do not get all of the provinces on board, I do not know what would happen to portability if people move from one province to another. It does not make sense. I want it to be portable, not just within Ontario and not just within federal government-regulated industries, but also through every business, including self-employment businesses.

• (1145)

The self-employed work very hard every day. We all know those individuals in our ridings who are entrepreneurs, who are risk-takers, who are out trying to make a living and trying to better themselves,

their livelihood, their family's livelihood and their community. There is nothing more satisfying than when a local entrepreneur is involved in community events.

They have not had the same opportunities in the past to save for their retirement. Often they hope that their business is their retirement plan. Perhaps they own the real estate that their business is on, but they hope to have some value in it so that they can sell it at the end of the day and retire, or else pass it on to their children or whomever they wish to.

Normally there is a cash-flow system that will help them with their retirement, but here is another opportunity for them. It will encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment and encourage people to create jobs and wealth in this country, and they will have an opportunity to save for their retirement. They themselves can sign up as individuals for the pooled registered pension plan.

With the concept of low cost, the issue is that just as in anything else we do, the greater we spread the risk and have economies of scale, in normal circumstances the less the cost will be for individuals to take part. It is a simple concept that works. No matter what it is, it works. It is a simple concept, and that is what these pooled registered plans would do.

There would be regulations about how much whoever is administering the plan would be able to charge, whether a bank or an insurance company. We would have some control over that level, so we would ensure it would be affordable. We have a large variety of people who have said positive things about this plan.

We had an amendment at report stage yesterday that would have gutted the bill. The New Democratic Party, the official opposition, voted against it. I just do not understand.

I can understand the opposition's argument that this is not the final answer—absolutely, we are not denying that—but why is the NDP denying Canadians an opportunity for another tool in the toolbox for their retirement? I can understand that the NDP members would like to see other things happen or that they have other suggestions. However, they had an amendment that would have gutted the bill completely. I do not understand denying the opportunity. The majority of provinces are on board and the majority of businesses are on board. I can go over quotes of different individuals and organizations saying that this is an important piece.

We need to provide the tools for savings. In our view, part of people's retirement planning is their individual responsibility. I do not think the majority of people in this country are interested in having the government completely control their retirement plan. There needs to be opportunity. It looks like I—

• (1150)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Questions and comments. The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member knows, a better plan, although similar to the one being discussed here today, has already been tested in Australia. Australian institutions realized that, after 10 years, the plan was producing results that showed that it had very high fees and costs, but gave rather low returns on investments.

Given that the Australian plan was mandatory and the one before us today would be voluntary, can the government provide any assurances that this will really work?

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. What we have done differently from the Australian plan is we have regulations about the administration and the costs that are involved with the plan.

Is it voluntary? It is voluntary for the organization to sign up to start the program, but the voluntary aspect of this plan is that one has to opt out. One does not opt in. When ABC company is started and it has a pooled registered plan, one comes in and is signed up for it. Employees have to tell the company that they are not interested in saving for retirement through this program.

We have looked at other programs around the world, including Australia. The indication was that the member believed the Australian plan was better. If so, why were there no amendments from the NDP to try to improve the plan rather than gut it? I do not understand how that works for Canadians.

In my view, this plan has the safeguards on the administrative side, and the opt-out issue will help Canadians save for retirement.

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just last week I held a town hall in my riding on the subject of pensions and old age security. When the various options facing the country with respect to pension reform were presented, a lot of people in the room nodded their heads when one person said that this was all well and good, but he did not have money to set aside in this economy. He said that what was happening with old age security was not going to help him much.

The question I have for the member, however, relates to a comment he made with respect to the enhancement of the Canada pension plan. The provincial treasurer in Prince Edward Island has been one of the champions in bringing finance ministers together to enhance the Canada pension plan. What I heard the hon. member say was that the CPP could not be enhanced because of some resistance from the province, which is the exact opposite of what I have been told in my conversations with the finance minister in Prince Edward Island. He says that the reason for not going forward with enhancements to the CPP is a flip-flop on the part of the federal government.

Would the hon. member be able to enlighten me on his version of what is happening with regard to why are not going forward with this enhancement to the CPP, which makes a whole lot more sense than what is being put at the top of the priority list by the government?

● (1155)

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, I am happy to enlighten my colleague from the Liberal Party. What I actually said, and what is the actual truth, which he needs to know, is that we need two-thirds of the provinces with two-thirds of the population. I agree that P.E.I. has been in favour of changes to the CPP. The population of the whole province is the same as that in my riding. P.E.I. is part of a group, a federation. As he should know, we are in a federation of provinces. It is not just P.E.I. and Canada.

What has happened is that other provinces, which I will not name, have been public about it and have told the minister that they are not in favour of changes to the CPP program. Therefore, we have no choice. It is not a flip-flop by the federal government. It has been on the table at the first ministers meetings and at the finance ministers meetings. I am talking about pensions, which have been on the agenda at every one of these meetings. The answer from some of the provinces with huge populations is that they are not interested in changes because they think their business communities will not be supportive of that change.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge the member for Burlington for all his hard work and his in-depth understanding of our retirement system. Indeed, we have focused a lot on it because we know the challenges that Canadians have faced. This has been reiterated in the report recently on the increasing number of seniors and the challenges they face.

To clarify one point, when companies enrol individuals, the employees have 60 days to opt out.

Referring to the previous question, there was unanimous support among all provincial finance ministers to pursue a framework for a pooled registered pension plan. Therefore, the hon. member for Burlington was exactly correct in his answer that there was not unanimous support for expansion of CPP.

The hon. member for Burlington mentioned one business. Could he reflect on some of the other businesses that have looked at this as an opportunity to help their employees?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, my riding is not all of Burlington. The Minister of Labour also represents a part of my city. In my city the largest employer employs just under 1,000 people. It has a pension plan. The city of Burlington has a pension plan.

Other than that, of the small and medium-sized businesses that make up the vast majority of my riding, most do not have pension plans. This is an opportunity for all those entrepreneurs, job-creators and people who are looking for new employees. A pooled registered pension plan would be an employee attraction opportunity so employers could gain and retain good quality employees for future generations.

● (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech given by my colleague from Burlington.

Government Orders

This bill is an admission of weakness in the sense that the premise is that since people cannot change their pension plans, the Conservatives are merely falling back on something else, something smaller, for a small group.

It seems to me that a government needs to show some leadership. If it is going to set out on a crusade, it must do so confidently and convincingly. I am sure that if the government had decided to try to convince the provinces that improving public pension plans was the way to go, it would have had the unanimous consent of the House.

So is this bill not an admission of weakness?

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. The bill is an opportunity for small and medium-sized businesses that do not have the capacity or the level of risk needed to have company pension plans. It is an opportunity for entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized businesses.

We operate under the rule of law in our country. For any changes to CPP, we need an agreement of two-thirds of the provinces with two-thirds of the population. We do not have that agreement. We are looking at other available opportunities and options. This is a good one. All provinces have agreed, initially, that this framework is the right approach to take. This is not an admission of weakness; it is an admission of doing something for Canadians, which the opposition does not seem to want to do.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to continue in this debate because there is a real divergence of opinion, which has a great deal to do with the fact that the proposed pooled registered pension plan would do nothing to solve Canada's pension crisis.

The pension crisis has been the subject of debate for the past several years. The issue is that more than 11 million Canadian workers do not have a workplace pension plan and the public pension plans, old age security and the Canada pension plan that everyone has, do not provide enough for people to live on in retirement. Even worse, the plan by the current government is to increase the age of retirement for OAS and seriously undermine the ability of workers who live with disabilities, or workers who have very stressful jobs to retire at an age that would allow them to have some quality of life in their senior years.

To make matters worse, most Canadians are not making up for their lack of a pension plan by saving for retirement on their own. Less than one-third of the people entitled to contribute to RRSPs actually do so. There is now more than \$600 billion in unused RRSP contribution room, all of that being carried forward. Only about one-third of Canadian households are currently saving at levels that would generate sufficient income to cover their non-discretionary expenses in their retirement.

It also needs to be noted that the market is not a reliable place in which to gamble retirement security. Turmoil in financial markets has had, and will continue to have, a devastating impact on workplace pension plans. People who have saved for retirement through RRSPs have found all too often that the value of their investments has dropped so much that they are now faced with

having to postpone their retirement or to struggle to replace retirement savings by attempting to find some kind of work.

The reality is, however, that finding employment at ages 66, 67, 68 is profoundly difficult. The workplace has changed and the skills that retirees once brought to the job are no longer marketable.

There is indeed a pension crisis, but this bill seems to have been simply thrown together hastily, in response to pressure from labour, seniors groups, political parties, notably the NDP, as a result of a national campaign to increase the CPP-QPP. There was no thought, just a knee-jerk response.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, 1.6 million seniors live in poverty in Canada and 12 million Canadians lack a workplace pension plan. Statistics Canada tells us more than 14% of senior women on their own are living in poverty, according to standard LICO measurement.

The sensible NDP proposal to increase the GIS enough to eliminate poverty among seniors would take care of this issue. Unfortunately the government is not interested.

By OECD standards, Canada's CPP-QPP system is relatively miserly. We are not terribly generous at all. Other countries similar to Canada provide much more generous public and guaranteed pensions. For example, social security in the United States has a maximum benefit of about \$30,000 a year. The maximum benefit in Canada is less, at \$12,000 a year.

Even if we add old age security to that, and that would be a maximum of just under \$7,000 a year, the total is still far below social security and places seniors in that poverty range of which I spoke.

As I indicated, most Canadian workers have no RRSP because they cannot afford it. Last year, only 31% of eligible Canadians contributed to their RRSPs and unused RRSP room is now about \$600 billion, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

● (1205)

Meanwhile, the latest numbers for the return on the CPP investment show that it barely lost ground, less than 1% during this current downturn in the economy, while the stock market, which is where the government wants Canadians to park most of their retirement savings in this pooled private plan, fell by 11%. That is significant.

The Australian experiment has been mentioned. Australia tried about 10 years ago to introduce a similar plan and had less than encouraging results. The Australian plan was mandatory with an opt-out provision. It was called the Australian superfund and it required employers to enrol their workers in one of many defined contribution plans offered by the private sector.

Government Orders

A recent review of the Australian superfund was commissioned by the Australian government after 12 years of experience. The review shows that, while people were saving as a result of the mandatory contributions, the investment returns were no better than inflation. The report attributed the poor results to high fees and costs despite the presumed role that competition was supposed to play in keeping these fees at a reasonable level. I will speak to that again in regard to the pooled registered plan.

There has been for several years a clear consensus among many experts that real pension reform was, and continues to be, critical. However, rather than intelligently and positively engaging in practical reform, the government has instead introduced its pooled registered pension plan, which, according to the federal Minister of Finance, is this incredible panacea. He said that it would make low-cost, private sector pension plans accessible to millions of Canadians who have, up to now, not had access to such plans.

The legislation introduced in mid-November would allow employers to offer PRPPs to their employees. The scheme would be run by insurance companies and other financial institutions. According to the minister, they would pool the savings of workers whose employers sign up for the program. The financial institutions would run these programs on behalf of employers and, of course, will charge a fee for doing that. Employers would not need to contribute to the plan and workers' savings would be locked in, although if employees provide notice in writing they, apparently, would be allowed to opt-out.

No pension would be guaranteed by this program. In effect, it is yet another voluntary savings scheme that would do nothing to address the pension crisis since very few people take advantage of existing voluntary retirement savings schemes now. It is not clear why officials are claiming that the proposed PRPPs will prove more attractive than anything that currently exists.

So far, the only advantage being promoted for PRPPs is that management fees would apparently be lower than individual RRSPs because of the pooling. There would be no cap on the management fee and therefore no guarantee of lower fees, nor is there any certainty that this would be a big selling point for the plans.

It is also worth noting that there is no evidence that people are not saving through RRSPs because of high management fees. It is far more likely that they are not saving because individuals are busy raising families, paying bills, trying to manage the cost of housing and trying to educate their kids. There is no money left at the end of the month for an RRSP.

As I said, there are no guarantees for lower fees. The PRPP is not a defined benefit plan. It would not provide a secure retirement income with a set replacement rate of pre-retirement income and it would not be fully transferable. The plan would not be indexed to inflation and it would not increase with the increasing cost of living.

Employers, not employees, would decide the contribution levels. As I indicated, it would not be mandatory for employers to contribute or even match employees' contributions. Without employers' contributions, it is not really a pension plan. In fact, employers who do not help their employees save for retirement could end up with a competitive advantage over employers who do.

Canada does not need yet another voluntary tax-assisted retirement savings program. It needs public pensions that provide all Canadians with a basic guarantee of adequate income that will protect their standard of living in retirement.

● (1210)

Expanding the Canada pension plan would meet this objective. In fact, federal and provincial finance ministers seemed set to take this route when they assembled for their meeting in Alberta in December 2010. Only one province opted out. That gives us our 66%. Despite the fact that only one province opted out, the federal government decided to abandon talks and introduce this pooled registered pension plan scheme instead.

Improving the replacement rate of the CPP retirement benefit would provide much better retirement pensions to virtually all Canadians. A relatively modest increase in contribution rates would be required but that could be phased in over a period of time, as the Canadian Labour Congress and others have proposed. The CPP covers all workers, including those who are self-employed, and its benefits would be guaranteed in relation to earnings and years of service. They would be indexed for inflation and fully portable from one job to another.

This option would address the two key issues in the pension system that are currently causing concern: the lack of coverage of workplace pension plans and the fact that individuals are not saving for their retirement by themselves. As well, an expanded CPP, of course, could reduce federal expenditures on GIS because more people would have adequate retirement incomes. It would also benefit employers because it would be a clear pension plan and they need not be concerned about a private plan. It is a public plan and it has a lot of true and clear benefits.

While the government says that CPP contribution rates cannot be increased when there is a fragile economy, it is worth noting that when the financing of CPP was changed at the end of the 1990s, combined employer-employee CPP contribution rates nearly doubled, from 5.6% of covered earnings to 9.9% over that five year period, but unemployment fell from 9.6% to 7.6%. So there are other side benefits.

It should also be noted that PRPPs will do nothing to help the baby boom generation now coming up to retirement. It seems that this lost generation will remain lost as far as pension reform is concerned. As I said previously, it has been estimated that roughly one-third of Canadians now in the age group of 45 to 64 are likely to end up with incomes that fall far short of adequate minimum incomes and the kind of income that would allow them to maintain their standard of living in retirement. The adequacy of CPP benefits has been an issue for more than 30 years. It is time now for federal and provincial governments to set aside ideology and work together to solve the problem.

Government Orders

• (1215)

The study by the pension expert for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Monica Townson, provides a thorough analysis of the PRPP and argues that expanding the Canada pension plan would provide better retirement pensions for virtually all Canadians. Ms. Townsend found that the expansion of the CPP would provide a mandatory defined benefit pension to virtually all Canadians, giving them a basic retirement income that, for modest and middle-income earners, would preserve their standard of living in retirement.

The government's PRPP proposal does not do this, not at all. It does not guarantee a pension, the benefits would depend on selection of investment and stock market performance and participation would depend on the employer deciding to take part. As I indicated before, the stock market took an 11% hit in the most recent economic downturn. People cannot afford an 11% economic hit.

The pooled registered pension plan is basically a defined contribution pension plan. In defined contribution plans, there are no guarantees as to how much money will be left when people retire. The risks are borne entirely by the individual employees. In these types of plans, the amount of money available at retirement depends on the outcome of investment in the stock market and people cannot rely on it. I have indicated that very clearly. Defined contribution plans lack the security of defined benefit pension plans, like CPP and QPP, which pay guaranteed set amounts on retirement. This is important to remember.

• (1220)

Bill C-25 places no caps on administration fees. It merely assumes lower costs will emerge through competition. Financial institutions, like banks, insurance companies and trust companies, stand to profit substantially from these fees. If we look at all those recommending this pooled registered pension plan, it is those with a vested interest, like financial institutions.

However, expanding the CPP-QPP would not cost the government any more than its proposed PRPP. Most important, expanding CPP-QPP would not entail transferring huge management fees to private financial institutions.

How can I get through to the government that seniors need to be protected? The PRPP would not help families drowning in debt. It fails because it is a voluntary defined contribution plan run by wealthy institutions. With a tenuous economy and high rates of unemployment, families do not need more risk. They need the stability of the CPP and QPP. Economists and provincial leaders have said so for years, but the out of touch government has turned its back on families. We need effective and fair pension reform.

We have validators for this. An editorial in the *Calgary Herald* of November 2010 stated:

The CPP already covers almost all Canadian workers and thus spreads the risk and management fees. It is fully portable, offers guaranteed income to all retirees, and is the only risk-free investment broadly available to workers. Private RRSPs and employer pension plans have proven much riskier than initially billed. Those who are in company pension plans are likely in a defined contribution scheme, where the amount that goes in is predetermined, but the payout is based on how well the fund is invested and ultimately performs. Nortel workers know only too well how that worked.

We know that Nortel employees in Canada have taken a beating because of the bankruptcy of Nortel. Many of those retirees are receiving a pension that is 40% less than they planned on and believed would be available. Anyone who was a disabled Nortel worker has lost all benefits. It is interesting to note, and the House should note it, that in the United States and Great Britain, when Nortel sold off its assets, there were billions of dollars in liquid assets. The Americans and the British protected their Nortel workers but in Canada there was nothing. Our government did not see fit to protect those pensioners. That is why it is so very important that we come up with a remedy that works.

Seniors have worked hard all their lives and have played by the rules. Now they simply want access to programs and services that their hard-earned tax dollars helped to make. Every senior in Canada has the absolute right to pension and income security. This bill would not provide the pension security that seniors today want and need, nor would it help them in preparing for their retirement.

It is time for real pension reform, not this sham perpetrated by the government. Bill C-25 would not accomplish any kind of security. Canadians do not need any more private voluntary savings schemes. They want real action to ensure they can retire in dignity.

I will say this one last time. Expanding the CPP and QPP would not cost the government any more than its proposed pooled registered pension plan. It would simply mean that there would be real retirement security. People deserve that. They have earned it.

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 hon. members says that stock markets are too risky for the retirement savings of Canadian people. She proposes as an alternative the Canada pension plan. How does she square those two statements when the Canada pension plan is overwhelmingly invested in the stock market?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, as everyone in this House knows, the board of CPP is very responsive and responsible. The costs of investing amount to about 4% of fees, whereas the RRSP system is about 40% management fees on money saved over a 40-year period.

As I indicated very clearly in my remarks, the CPP in this very difficult economic time experienced a 1% reduction in monetary assets. The stock market had an 11% decline. When we start to compare, people in this country cannot afford to take a hit of 11% on their savings. It is as simple as that.

The pooled registered pension plan guarantees nothing.

Government Orders

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been working for some time with my hon. colleague on issues of pensions and seniors. I applaud her comments and her interest in these issues.

In her experience in dealing with the need for pension reform in Canada, what percentage of people across this country does the member think would benefit from this proposed answer from the government as to what pension reform is? We did not hear how it was a failure in Australia. How many people does the member think would take advantage of this plan?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, it is hard to say. Only about 30% of Canadians are able to set aside any money in personal private plans. Only about 30% of Canadians have any kind of workplace pension. My guess is that will not improve. What the government is offering is another private vehicle. It would be optional for employers to make contributions. The employer would have to set it up. If the employer were not interested, nothing would happen.

It makes far more sense to look at the CPP, because it is absolutely solid and it guarantees the workers of this country a substantive and reasonable retirement. We need to improve it, most certainly. I have been very clear about that. We cannot continue to let 70% of Canadians fall by the wayside.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are at a historic crossroads, particularly with Canadian Pacific, whose retirement funds are back up for negotiation.

These people have worked for a certain number of years for the company and they have many years of experience. Despite that, they are losing their pension fund and have to renegotiate it.

I would like to congratulate the member on her excellent speech and ask her to explain what she would do to ensure a secure retirement fund for these people so that they can retire comfortably after working for a company for 35 years.

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has provided me with an opportunity to talk about legislation that has been proposed by New Democrats over a number of years. Basically it would be pension protection legislation. It would also protect workers in the case of bankruptcy or a company moving. We have seen a lot of companies, particularly in my riding, moving away and causing real disruption to families. This NDP bill would provide three levels of protection. It would provide vacation pay, it would provide pension protection, and it would ensure that if a company moved, there would be something there. We need to have that in place.

In addition, it would be possible to set up an insurance plan where various pension contributors would make a small contribution and provide insurance so that when a plan went bust there would be this savings for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech.

She began by talking briefly about poverty among seniors. I would like her to expand on the fact that, for the past 35 years, workers throughout the industrialized world have been fighting for adequate pension plans, not just private pension plans but, most importantly, public ones. The government is dealing with an imaginary problem not with the real ones: poverty and job creation. What the government should be doing is creating a strong social fabric to enable communities to reach their full potential. This is about older people who want to continue contributing to society, but do not have an opportunity to do so. Can my colleague comment on that?

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal in that question. It reminds me that an estimated 1.3 million seniors in this country live below the poverty line. They do not have an adequate amount to sustain themselves, whether it be for prescriptions, housing or food on the table. That is not acceptable. This is an incredibly wealthy country. We have resources that are the envy of the world. We should most definitely be looking after our seniors.

I think a very valid point was made. Seniors tend to spend all of their earnings in their community and local neighbourhood. They are looking after themselves and occasionally perhaps doing a little shopping for their grandchildren. If they had adequate incomes, and they deserve adequate incomes, they would be generating jobs and stimulating their local economy.

It is interesting and tragic that government members have spoken about seniors as being a drag on the economy. They keep talking about the deficit in terms of the seniors of the future. Seniors are contributors. They are not a drag on our economy or on our community. They are important members and they deserve to be treated in that respectful way.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

In an earlier question for a government member, I said that this bill is the government's admission of weakness with respect to the pension plan problem. I would like her to comment on that.

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of the hysteria that loomed about 30 or 35 years ago. I was just a child, but I do recall the hysteria that the CPP would not be there for my generation and that it was going to evaporate. We all had to run out to buy RRSPs if we did not want to live in penury.

Well, the reality is that the CPP is absolutely solid and it will remain solid for the foreseeable future. Estimates have it remaining solid for the next 75 years at least. We need to make sure that it has the proper investment so that it can continue well beyond that time.

Government Orders

The same is true regarding old age security. We have heard from the former actuary of OAS who has said that OAS is absolutely rock solid for the next 30 to 35 years. We do not have to worry about future generations. We have heard from the Parliamentary Budget Officer who has said that the cost of OAS is about 2.3% of GDP now, it would climb to about 3.3% in the next 20 years and then decline rapidly, but we can still afford it. We have also heard from the OECD. It said that Canada is blessed in terms of retirement security. We simply have to make sure that we do what is necessary now to secure it. This pooled registered pension plan scheme is not that.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to speak to Bill C-25, its inadequacies and the concerns that many of us continue to have here on this side of the House.

I have often referred to Bill C-25 as being nothing more than bread crumbs to a starving person because in reality that is all it is. I doubt very much that it would help very many Canadians. From everything I am hearing from the provinces and from other people who have looked into the issue, there would be big management fees and little help for people when it comes to serious pension reform. It would simply be a mechanism for those who have money to save for their own retirement. The government tries to call that its answer to pension reform. I am sure we will hear its solution to pension reform was PRPPs for the next five years or so, until it realizes that as Australia's plan failed, so would this one. While I have no difficulties with creating savings vehicles for Canadians, we must also work to help those without the means to save. That is what pension reform is really all about. Bill C-25 is not pension reform. Anyone who makes that claim is misleading the public.

Two years ago, I asked the government what it planned to do to protect and preserve pensions for all Canadians. The minister responded in this House by saying that pensions were provincial and should be left to provincial legislatures to deal with. He said pensions were not a federal problem. However, Canadians rightly found that notion to be wrong, short-sighted and clearly unacceptable. The Conservatives produced Bill C-25 which is a copy of an Australian proposal that, after 12 years, has been declared a failure. The government was sent into a scramble. It had to find something to satisfy the accusations that it was not doing anything so it came up with this idea.

I will cast my vote, as will my party, with very deep concern and caution because it is nothing more than bread crumbs to a starving person. However, it is that small tool in a toolbox. It is not the answer but we will support it because it is one small step in the advancement of talking and recognizing the need for pension reform in Canada.

In 1998, when the current Prime Minister was campaigning, he announced that he wanted to privatize the Canada pension plan. That is right, the Conservatives proposed the elimination of the public Canada pension plan. Just imagine where we would be today. Not only is the government talking about moving from age 65 to 67 in this current budget bill, and is clearly moving in that direction, imagine where Canadians would find themselves if we did not have the Canada pension plan or it had been privatized. All of a sudden their retirement plans would severely change.

Who knows if that is not the next shoe to drop in the big plans that the government has? Will the Conservatives decide they are going to privatize the CPP? I am not fear mongering, but who knows what is going to be next on the agenda of the government?

At the time, the government suggested that the CPP should be replaced with a super savings account that would allow Canadians to put all of their extra money into investments for their retirement. The government did not talk about the fact that most Canadians are not up to speed on how to invest in the stock market, that they can make poor choices and that their alternative would be to pay high management fees to people who have that expertise. This would be another way of discouraging Canadians from what they are trying to do. Canadians would have to become market experts. Their employer would be playing no administrative role in PRPPs. Canadians would have to bear 100% of that investment risk. A single market stumble could spell the end of any retirement hopes. We all know what happened with the investments a few years ago when the stock market crashed, and what happened to thousands of Canadians whose retirement income was lost.

The Conservatives talk about people working later. They are going to have to work later because they lost a tremendous amount of their retirement income. They do not have the expertise needed. They would need the expertise with PRPPs, to be able to manage a certain degree of their investments. Employers would be forced to create administrative systems to enrol members. If the provinces made them mandatory, and that is highly unlikely, Ontario, the province I represent, has already indicated it is not going to have anything to do with PRPPs. It does not believe this is the answer to the pension issue.

● (1235)

The proposal for an enhancement of the Canada pension plan, which is what we have been proposing, along with the supplementary Canada pension plan, which I will talk about a little further, are much more reasonable methods for most Canadians out there.

This PRPP will be of no help to homemakers unless they are contributing to employment income. One of the challenges facing many women today is that, when they are at home caring for children or elderly relatives, parents and so on, they are out of the workforce. When they are out of the workforce, they have a much more difficult time thinking about their pension and what will be in it for them. That is why unless they are in the workforce for 35 or 40 years, most women at 65, or 67 as the government is going to, end up with minimal income. They are living on \$11,000 or \$12,000. That is not the Canada I want to live in, and I do not think it is the Canada most people want to live in. Changing that age to 67 years old will certainly hurt a tremendous amount of people.

Government Orders

I had a meeting in Kemptville last night. There were about 60 or 70 people. When I asked the people there, who were a non-partisan group, to raise their hand if they supported moving the age of retirement from 65 to 67, everyone in that room opposed the change, and there were many Conservatives in that room. They did not feel it was necessary, but that it was part of an ideology of the government or because the Conservatives are starving the government for revenue sources by removing the GST and lowering taxes. The government only has so much money. That is probably the real reason: they are starving the beast we call the government. They will not have the money to give people pensions at age 65, so they want to move it up and take \$30,000 out of the pocket of every Canadian over that two-year period of time.

As I indicated, the management fees are a big problem on PRPPs. We know that Canada has an F rating, according to the OECD. It says Canadians already pay some of the highest management fees in the world on their mutual funds. That is exactly where we are going with PRPPs, creating more vehicles for people to be able to do this.

However, the government knows all of this. We raised all these issues at committee. Our Liberal finance critic moved a couple of amendments that would have strengthened and improved the PRPP, which went nowhere. The Conservative members put their heads in the sand and voted down the amendments rather than possibly thinking that maybe together, because we were prepared to work with the government on this, we could strengthen it and make it better, recognizing that we need some pension reform. However, the government members do not care what everybody else offers. If it is not their idea, it is not good enough.

It is the same if we talk about some of the things in the budget. Look at the changes to EI and what impact they will have on Canadians all across the land. Never mind talking about where they are putting money into pensions. Many of these people will be forced to move away from their families to go out west, which is clearly where the jobs will be, starving other parts of Canada. Again, that is not the way we are supposed to be going. Canada needs to be a land where everybody is treated fairly and with a bit of respect and understanding.

What happens to the seasonal workers who are being brought into the country? Many of those seasonal workers are the reason we have a thriving industry when it comes to fruits, vegetables and so on. Canadian employers need those temporary foreign workers to come over and be able to do those jobs. We should not kid ourselves. There are lots of Canadians who physically do not want to do those jobs. I think they are quite happy to see these temporary foreign workers come over and work for six months in the agriculture industry or other industries and then go back to their home countries with some very much needed money, because many of these people are coming from countries that are very poor. Will we deny them that opportunity, again with short-sightedness and some of those issues that are in the budget, in Bill C-38, that we will continue to deal with over these next few days that will hurt many Canadians and employers? It will hurt Canadians if that is the only work they have. It is not as if they do not want to work 12 months or 10 months of the year. They are seasonal workers. Who will be working the fisheries?

I remember the amount of people who told me they would love to work longer but the season is only so long, when I visited the east

coast last year with one of my colleagues. Where are they supposed to go at the end of that particular point? They have to collect EI because they have no other options.

● (1240)

Some of the changes at second reading, which the Liberal caucus said it would have liked to put forward, were raised by many witnesses as additional ideas. However, when it comes to voting at the committee level, government members vote down anything anybody else suggests, no matter how good it is. The Liberal finance critic put a very good amendment forward on the issue of controlling high management fees, because that is a major concern for Liberals, one that would cap the management fees. There was a bit of discussion with government members, but it did not matter. They voted it down as they do everything else because it was not their idea.

Reducing government spending is a laudable goal, as we hear from the government. However, financial players offering PRPPs will need to offer annuities so that members may convert their accumulated balances into a stream of pension payments. Once that occurs, insurers are required by law to price in a profit margin and keep regulatory capital aside to underwrite those contracts. In simple language, this means that investors, the average Canadians the government is talking about, are legally required to pay fees that would guarantee a profit for the banks and insurance companies. This is a very inefficient way of delivering pensions, and once Canadians find out about all the small print, fewer and fewer of them and businesses will be interested in getting involved in all of this.

Those requirements are the cornerstones of the PRPP we are talking about. With this in mind, I am left to wonder how the PRPPs could possibly yield any results for Canadian pensioners. The simple answer is that they are not going to help the average Canadian prepare for retirement, just as millions of Canadians have not been able to max out their RRSPs either. It is just a locked-in RRSP. That is what the PRPP is. Forcing seniors to work longer and harder to save for retirement on top of asking them to pay for \$6 billion in giveaways to the largest corporations, \$13 billion for new megaprisons and \$40 billion for untendered stealth fighter jet deals is not a plan for pensions. However, the government is certainly spending a lot of money and clearly it is looking to pay for all of these on the backs of Canada's seniors.

PRPPs will not work for those who need them the most. Instead of copying the failed work of others, why did the Prime Minister not seek to lift seniors out of poverty? The supplemental Canada pension plan already proposed by the Liberals would provide the best of both worlds. It would create a new retirement savings vehicle for Canadians who need it, while delivering the low overhead cost structure of the Canada pension plan.

Government Orders

The supplementary Canada pension plan is a simple and cost-effective solution to the pension question. It is a defined benefit pension for everyone who has a social insurance number, even those who have left the workforce during their lives for child rearing, illness, seasonal employment and educational advancement. It would use proven and existing resources to give every Canadian man, woman and child a reliable and stable investment vehicle for the future.

The supplementary Canada pension plan is a plan for real pension reform, and I offer it to the government at any time because it would benefit Canadians all across the board, no matter what their occupation. Even if they are home and not able to work, they could still contribute to the Canada pension plan. I could contribute to the supplementary plan. However, by steadfastly following their PRPP plan, by ignoring Liberal calls to improve the CPP, moving to slash the old age pension, slashing EI, cutting people off, making it difficult for farmers to be able to employ temporary foreign workers and all that goes with it, the Conservatives are really showing their true colours. Balancing the budget on the backs of seniors is nothing short of waging a war on the poor. It is unacceptable, and the government should be ashamed of that direction.

The Prime Minister, who is the sixth highest paid political leader in the world, earning an annual salary of \$296,000 U.S., is telling Canadians to put their extra money into the bank for their retirement, but he seems to forget that not everybody has extra money. What about the seniors who pay their taxes, raise their families and work hard but still do not have extra money to invest?

• (1245)

Let me tell members about a woman named Mary, whom I met last night. She is a single woman who talked to me about income splitting. Yes, the income splitting idea is a good idea for all those who have money and who have a partner, but for single men or women who do not have anyone to share their pension income with, what help is it to them? Mary has to take the hit for the taxes that others get to save. She asked me why the government would do that when it is clearly unfair. I said she would just have to look around and judge for herself. Government is all about choices.

As a government, one makes choices every day and decides what is important and what is not. Clearly, this government's choices are far more interested in helping the rich and much less interested in helping the low-income or middle class Canadians, or in helping to build the Canada, Mr. Speaker, that you and I believe in.

The Prime Minister is the same man who said that the Canada pension plan should be scrapped in 1998, which I referred to earlier, and that government involvement in the financial security of Canadians runs counter to the Conservative ideology of fending for oneself. If one cannot fend for oneself, there is no room in the Conservatives' Canada.

That is very different from the Canada I want to live in. I believe we have an opportunity for a hand up, not a hand out. We can create an atmosphere where Canadians can thrive and do well. Canadians are a very independent, tough bunch of people. We are used to standing on our own feet, and we take great pride in that. I do not believe there are a whole lot of Canadians who are interested in living off the purse of the government.

Given the fact that the Prime Minister has made the kind of comments he has made, I have to wonder if these changes are not the first bricks in the long-desired firewall that the Prime Minister indicated he wanted to create.

I am very glad to have had the opportunity to speak for a bit today. The changes that are coming forward, both in Bill C-25, the PRPP legislation, and in Bill C-38, and all the things the government is moving are going in this direction, which is not an area to which I think we should be going.

We need to be making some changes as well to the Bankruptcy Act. We all know about Nortel and what happened to the thousands of people who were working for Nortel and in other companies that go bankrupt where individuals lose their pension funds.

There is no change. With all of the multitude of things in the omnibus Bill C-38, there is nothing in there about how to protect people's pensions when it comes to bankruptcy, how to better protect Canadians. It is all about creating crisis management and making people think that the country is in a major crisis situation when it is not, whether or not we are talking about immigration issues and creating a crisis, in order to justify the means at the end.

It is unacceptable for us and it is unacceptable for Canadians.

• (1250)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for her speech on the pension issue. She has been very involved in the question of pensions for a long time.

I stand with the members of the opposition parties in general in believing that the CPP is our best and most reliable pension system and that it must be expanded. I am concerned about this new approach, because it is discretionary. It appears to create the greatest benefit for those people who buy and sell investment services.

I would like to ask my hon. friend what can be done and whether we can put forward perhaps a private member's bill from this side of the House to ensure that we protect the pensions that are held in firms that go into bankruptcy. For such plans as that of Nortel or Catalyst Paper and others, can we make those secured creditors in bankruptcy?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, we had many discussions and actually asked many questions of the government on this side of the House in that whole debacle with Nortel, calling on the government to make the kind of changes to the Bankruptcy Act that would eliminate the contribution holiday. The government did take some action on that part of the file, requiring a larger amount of surplus before they could take a contribution holiday, but there is much more to be done when we come to this whole issue of protecting individuals' pensions.

Government Orders

We all believe that, when we put money into a pension fund, it is sacrosanct. Certainly, we Liberals believe it has to be protected 100%. We have to realize people are counting on that money to be there, and if a company goes bankrupt and leaves them as Nortel did, many have nowhere to go.

We have examined many different options. The Province of Ontario has a fund, as does the U.S., which backs up to \$1,000 per month some of the pensions of companies that go bankrupt, but that is under huge pressure and it is not necessarily the best answer either.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member a question regarding how she feels seniors are being treated now after six years of successive increases in the personal exemption, which helps seniors; an increase in the age exemption, which helps seniors; the enrichment of GIS greater than it has been in the past 25 years, which directly helps seniors and low income seniors as well; the tax-free savings account, which will help future seniors and has been heralded by many economists and accountants as being the biggest step since the RRSP; and pension splitting for seniors as well.

These are successive innovations toward helping seniors have a better quality of life after they have retired. Now we are adding the pooled pension plan. This will be one more tool for them to have the best years of their life after they retire. Would the hon. member not agree with that?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the government has clearly made some moves. TFSAs were a recommendation in the red book under Paul Martin when he was the minister of finance. TFSAs were recommended as a good savings vehicle. I did not say there was anything wrong with that.

I referred earlier to income splitting. The government has done a lot of things to help people who have a lot of money. What happens to those people who are living on \$11,000? There was a bit of an increase to the GIS but was it enough?

Why was the decision made to increase the age to 67? That clearly takes \$15,000 a year out of the pockets of every Canadian. The government could have done lots of things rather than change the age to 67. It could have used the clawback amount. If someone is earning \$60,000, does that person still need \$540 a month in OAS, or would it be better to look at the whole system?

There is a bigger issue. The government should have consulted with Canadians on the future plans of our social security safety net to find out what we could all do to better improve the lives of Canadians rather than deny Canadians and make them wait an extra two years.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the debate and more particularly the recent exchange between the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale and that member. I find it interesting that they are congratulating each other or wanting to take credit for the tax-free savings account, which to me misses the boat entirely for the vast majority of seniors.

If a person could only put \$5,000 into a TFSA that makes 2% interest right now, that person would get \$100 a year in interest.

Because it is tax-free that individual would save \$30. That would be \$1 a month for seniors, which would buy them exactly nothing.

What we really need is a serious debate about doubling the CPP, about ensuring that we do not lose our defined benefit pension plans to defined contribution plans. Above all, we need to lift seniors out of poverty by increasing the GIS.

Could the member comment on which of those three things she would make the number one priority in the next Liberal red book, or pink book, or whatever iteration we will see next?

• (1255)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, as soon as we have the book ready, I will ensure she gets the first copy.

The government is expected to talk about a variety of different issues and how it can better help Canadians. That is what Canadians expect us to do. They do not expect us to be partisan all of the time. We are supposed to do what is in the best interests of Canadians throughout the country. I do not want to see seniors continuing to live in poverty. We know that at least 300,000 seniors live in poverty.

Let me remind everyone that it was Mackenzie King, Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau who brought in everything from OAS to GIS to the spouses allowance. None of those programs were ever brought in by the Conservatives. All of them were brought in by Liberal governments because we saw how many people were living in poverty. The Conservative government is clearly going in the opposite direction.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's passion and caring attitude when it comes to dealing with seniors in Canada. I appreciate her comments with respect to why the House should deal with the issue of pensions, whether it is the GIS, OAS or CPP. These are good solid programs that are the cornerstone of our pensions going forward.

With regard to the budget, the member knows that the government has increased the age of retirement from 65 to 67. She has spoken a great deal on this issue. Maybe she could provide comment on what responses she has received. Many of our colleagues in the House, particularly those on the opposition benches, have stood up on virtually a daily basis to bring forward petitions on this issue. Canadians are quite upset with this element of pensions. This bill is all about that.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat an issue. I was at a meeting in rural Ontario last night. Of the 50 to 60 people who were in that room, probably 40% of them were in their sixties or maybe in their seventies and the rest were much younger.

Government Orders

When I asked them whether they supported or rejected the idea of moving the age for old age security from 65 to 67, every person in that room was opposed to that issue. I think they all recognized that if the average age of retirement today was 62, we would be moving backward to increase it to age 67. At one time, we did have it at age 67. That is when a previous Liberal prime minister, recognizing there was a severe amount of poverty among seniors, moved the eligibility from 67 years of age to 65 years of age and started to introduce other programs in addition to the OAS.

The current government is going in the exact opposite direction, back to where we were years ago, with seniors having to suffer in poverty, alone.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member does herself a great discredit and undermines her own arguments and credibility with some of the demagogic and over-the-top rhetoric she uses to characterize the motives of the government, saying that it does not care about low-income people, that it only wants to help those who are wealthy and so forth.

Would the member not agree with the objective, incontrovertible fact, that the Government of Canada is currently spending more on transfers to seniors than it ever has in the history of the Dominion? We are spending more on transfers on CPP, more in transfers on OAS, more in transfers for GIS, more per capita for seniors than ever in our history.

If it is her view that this is inadequate, then what does that say about the government of which she was a member? If this government is too parsimonious with respect to transfers to seniors, then what was her government doing when it was spending less on these programs?

• (1300)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, we have an aging population. Every year we have an increased amount of seniors collecting OAS and GIS. Next year there will be even more money spent on OAS, GIS and so on, because of that aging seniors population. All we have to do is look at the numbers five years ago and look at the numbers today. It is not a difficult thing.

To suggest that some of us are exaggerating things, we are actually taking lessons from those folks across the hall.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak to some of the key measures in Bill C-25, An Act relating to pooled registered pension plans and making related amendments to other Acts.

I will splitting my time with the member for Richmond Hill.

First, I would like to thank the Minister of State for Finance, the member of Parliament from the great riding of Macleod, for bringing forth this great legislation.

Our government understands that working Canadians and seniors want an effective and sustainable retirement income system that will help them achieve their retirement goals. Canadians who have worked hard, saved diligently and are relying on their pension and savings to support them once they retire should have full confidence that the system will serve them well when they need it.

Canadians can rest assured that our government stands with hard-working Canadians who are counting on their pension plan for a stable retirement. As part of this commitment, we continue to take the steps necessary to ensure that Canada's pension framework remains strong. In doing so, we are building on all that has been accomplished so far.

Let me offer a few examples of what we have achieved.

In particular, since 2006, our government has increased the age credit amount by \$1,000 in 2006 and by another \$1,000 in 2009. We have doubled the maximum amount of income eligible for the pension income credit to \$2,000.

We have introduced pension income splitting. This single item was lobbied for very diligently for years by organizations like CARP and other organizations that represented seniors. It was well received when this came in.

We have increased the age limit for maturing pensions and registered retirement savings plans to 71 from 69 years of age.

Despite these advancements, there is always more to be done. That is why in December 2009, our government held a meeting with the provincial and territorial finance ministers in Whitehorse to discuss the retirement income system and, in going forward, how this system could be further improved.

In June 2010, federal, provincial and territorial governments reviewed options to improve Canada's retirement income system after extensive consultations with Canadians. Many of the members of the opposition will be interested to know that among these proposals was a modest expansion to the CPP, the Canada pension plan.

However, many employers, especially small and medium-sized businesses, something my riding has hundreds of, raised serious concerns about increasing the mandatory deductions that would come with an expanded CPP. Simply put, during these times of economic uncertainty and with Canada's economic recovery still fragile, it would have been reckless to impose a job-killing tax on job-creators.

While there were strong objections to expanding the CPP, there was unanimous agreement to moving forward with pooled registered pension plans. This led to priority being given to the PRPP framework, the announcement of the initiative at the subsequent finance ministers' meeting in December 2010 and the legislation that is before us today.

PRPPs mark a significant step forward in advancing our retirement income agenda by improving the range of retirement savings options available to Canadians. They will make well-regulated, low-cost private sector pension plans accessible to millions of Canadians who have up to now not had access to such plans. In fact, many employees of small and medium-sized businesses and self-employed workers will also now have access to a private pension plan for the very first time. This is groundbreaking. This will be a key improvement to Canada's retirement income system.

Government Orders

PRPPs will also complement and support our government's overarching objective of creating and sustaining jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Quite simply, the PRPP framework is the most effective and targeted way to help these modest and middle-income individuals save for their retirement. These individuals consist of the 60% of Canadians who do not have access to employer-sponsored pension plans.

• (1305)

PRPPs address this gap in the retirement system by first providing a new, accessible, straightforward and administratively low-cost retirement option for employers to offer their employees. It would allow individuals who currently may not participate in a pension plan, such as the self-employed and employees of companies that do not offer a pension plan, to make use of this new option. It would enable more people to benefit from the lower investment management costs that result from membership in a large pooled pension plan. It would allow for the portability of benefits and facilitate an easy transfer between plans, and it would ensure that funds are invested in the best interests of plan members.

These are all important areas where the retirement income system can be improved. However, members need not take my word for it. Let us hear what others have to say.

According to the Canadian Bankers Association:

PRPPs will provide a new, accessible, large-scale and low-cost pension option to employers, employees and the self-employed. PRPPs will give all working Canadians the benefit of professionally-managed pension plans, and will be particularly beneficial to the self-employed and employees of small businesses.

I can speak to that as someone who was a self-employed farmer before I came to this House. My only pension at that time was my land, or whatever I could accumulate over the years. It was the same with my parents. There are hundreds of thousands of Canadians in the same boat, and they are going to get a chance to benefit from this great initiative.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says:

PRPPs can give many businesses, individuals and the self-employed additional retirement options, and many millions of Canadians who currently lack adequate retirement savings will benefit.

That is why our government, in coordination with the provincial and territorial governments, is working to implement PRPPs as soon as possible. These plans would help Canadians, including the self-employed, meet their retirement objectives by providing access to a new low-cost accessible pension option.

I am sure that all the provinces will take the advice of the CFIB, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the CBA when they jointly said that the longer governments take to establish a system of PRPPs, the less time those employees will have to use this vehicle to save for their retirement. Simply put, we need to act now.

Bringing the federal PRPP framework into force means Canadians can be confident about the long-term viability of their retirement system. We are listening, and we will continue to listen to their views on how we can strengthen the security of pension plan benefits and ensure that the framework is balanced and appropriate for the long term.

Canada's retirement income system is recognized around the world by such experts as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, as a model that succeeds in reducing poverty among Canadian seniors. With Bill C-25, we are making it better by working toward a permanent long-term solution to encourage greater pension coverage among Canadians.

I know that members on this side of the House will support Bill C-25 and vote to establish a pension plan that would help millions of Canadians save for their retirement. I encourage all the members of the opposition to support this very important bill and to vote to help the seniors of tomorrow provide for their retirement today.

I remind all members that a lot of legislation, whether government legislation or private members' bills, comes before this House. Not all of us in this place like every aspect of every bill, but the potential of Bill C-25 to help people plan their retirement is something that is certainly needed and has been wanted for a long time. I think that all members in this House should look at the quality parts of the bill. It is an improvement to what we have today, and I think it will be very well received out there among seniors.

• (1310)

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in my colleague's comments respecting the degree of opposition to the enhancement of the Canada pension plan. I have three questions for him in connection with his characterization of the apparent opposition to the enhancement of the CPP.

One, is the most vociferous opponent to the enhancement of the plan the Government of Canada? Two, is that a reversal of its earlier position? Three, who are the others?

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to adding any new restrictions or taxes on small and medium-sized businesses, which are predominant in my riding and I think in most ridings across this country, these are entities that feed families and create jobs and economic activity in this country. This government is the only party in this House that supports them by not adding on those taxes.

The member across the way belongs to a party that has never seen a tax it did not like. This government is philosophically opposed to that idea. We have reduced over 140 taxes in our six years here, and we are not done yet.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a number of spokespeople came to talk about the Canadian system and about the fact that there are already a number of private savings plans on the market right now. Yet, it is no secret that the government is in the process of creating a new private savings plan when such plans already exist and are underused. Most Canadians do not contribute to such plans.

Why create a new plan instead of investing in providing information to Canadians about the existing systems? Why not improve the existing systems instead of creating another one when we do not even know what effects it will have on Canada's private savings plan market?

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the way is basically asking why we would act on something that hundreds of thousands of seniors across this country have been asking for.

This government cares about the seniors of this country, and that is why we are doing this. The territories and provinces realize the importance of it. We sat down with those provinces and territories to come up with a solution; this was a consensus, and here today we have that culminated in Bill C-25.

We listened to them, and I suggest that the member should listen to her seniors as well.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. He very articulately explained the benefits.

What I like best about the new pooled registered pension plan, and I would like the member to comment on it, is the flexibility it would have for workers and employers to participate. We know what is happening with the workforce. We know there is fluidity. We know that people are not staying at one job for 30 years any longer, but are moving around. This is one of those pension scheme systems that would allow employees to have a pension that would be portable to wherever they choose to work.

Would the member comment on that and share some anecdotes about how it would specifically help businesses and residents in Owen Sound?

• (1315)

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Mississauga—Streetsville. The constituents of that riding are very fortunate to have him as their representative here in Ottawa.

In regard to some of the examples that he has about how it would help Owen Sound, it would help the same types of businesses and individuals in his riding of Mississauga—Streetsville. I talked about the self-employed, for example. I was in agriculture, but there are all kinds of small business owners across this country who do not have a pension plan they can contribute to; in the same way that the employees of those small businesses could contribute, those small business owners would also get a chance.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me just take a moment to thank the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for sharing his time with me. The good people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound are fortunate to have such a passionate and hard-working member of Parliament speaking here in the House on their behalf.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to highlight some of the key measures in Bill C-25, an act that implements the federal framework for pooled registered pension plans, or PRPPs, as I will refer to them.

Our Conservative government understands that hard-working Canadians want an effective and sustainable retirement income system in place to help them achieve their retirement goals. On this side of the House, we believe that Canadian seniors, after working hard, contributing to society and saving diligently, deserve nothing less. Members can rest assured that our Conservative government stands with these hard-working Canadians and that it will continue to

take action to ensure that Canada's retirement income system remains among the strongest in the world. This is where pooled registered pension plans fit in.

The PRPP will mark a significant step forward in advancing our retirement income system by improving the range of retirement savings options available to Canadians. It will make low-cost, broad-based private sector pension plans accessible to the millions of Canadians who up to now have not had access to such plans. In fact, it is important to note that currently 60% of Canadians do not have access to a workplace pension plan. Self-employed individuals do not have access to workplace pension plans at all. Introducing pooled registered pension plans means that many employees of small and medium-sized businesses, as well as self-employed workers, will finally have access to a workplace pension plan for the very first time in their lives.

Let us take a look and see what features of the PRPPs might be found attractive by employees of small and medium-sized businesses and by the self-employed.

A key feature of PRPPs is auto-enrolment. This means that if an employer offers a PRPP, employees will be automatically enrolled in a pension plan. This feature is expected to increase participation in PRPPs by promoting retirement savings specifically targeting those disengaged savers.

Once plan members begin contributing to their PRPP, it is important that they use this money for what it was intended: their retirement. After all, the goal of the pooled registered pension plan is to help Canadians save for their own retirement. Unlike the funds in RRSPs, which can be accessed at any time, the funds in a PRPP would be locked in. This provision will help to ensure that plan members will in fact have savings when they retire.

Another key feature is portability. Many employees will appreciate the ability to transfer funds between administrators when they change jobs. Not only will portability benefit employees of the plan; it will also increase competition among PRPP administrators, thereby encouraging lower costs.

This leads me to my next point, and it is a very important one. One of the key benefits of PRPPs is that they will be low cost. By achieving lower costs, pooled registered pension plans will leave more money in the pockets of Canadians when they retire.

Members might ask how this will work. Pooling pension savings means that the costs of administering the pension funds will be spread over a larger group of people. This will enable plan members to benefit from the lower investment management costs that are typically associated with an average mutual fund.

Stakeholders across our nation are excited about the pooled registered pension plans and the prospect that millions of Canadians will now have access to a workplace pension for the very first time.

However, let us not just take my word for it. Let us hear what others have to say.

Government Orders

•(1320)

Dan Kelly, Vice-President of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, stated, “A new voluntary, low-cost and administratively simple retirement savings mechanism will allow more employers, employees, and the self-employed to participate in a pension plan”.

If we are not satisfied with that, let us hear what the Ontario Medical Association had to say. It stated, “The creation of pooled registered pension plans...levels the playing field by providing the self-employed, including physicians, with better access to additional savings opportunities that have up until now been unavailable”.

The pool registered pension plan is not some patchwork scheme. It is an important program that would benefit millions of Canadians. Whether people work for or own small businesses, the pooled registered pension plan would be available to them.

What are the next steps? The bill before us today, Bill C-25, the pooled registered pension plans act, represents the federal portion of the PRPP framework, which is a major step forward in making these available to Canadians. Our government has been collaborating closely with the provinces to implement pooled registered pension plans across our country. Once the provinces put in place their PRPP legislation, the legislative and regulatory framework for PRPPs would be up and running, allowing pooled registered pension plan administrators to develop and offer plans to Canadians and their employers.

Canadians want their governments to act on their priorities and deliver results on a timely basis. The PRPP should be no exception. For this reason, I urge all of the provinces to follow the wise advice of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association when they collectively said that the longer governments take to establish a system of pooled registered pension plans, the less time those employees will have to use this vehicle to save for their retirements.

Our government is confident that the provincial side of the framework will soon be in place so that millions of Canadians can reach their retirement objectives. We urge our provincial counterparts to take action and follow the lead of our Conservative government. By bringing the PRPP framework into force, Canadians can be confident about the long-term viability of their retirement system. We are listening and we will continue to listen to their views on how we can strengthen the security of pension plan benefits and ensure the framework is balanced and appropriate for the long term.

Canada's retirement income system is recognized around the world by such experts as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as a model that succeeds in reducing poverty among Canadian seniors. Our system is the envy of the world. With Bill C-25, we would be making it even better by working toward a permanent, long-term solution to encourage greater pension coverage among Canadians.

Let me summarize this new defined pension plan. It would be available to employers, employees and the self-employed. The PRPP would improve the range of retirement savings options to Canadians in a number of ways. It would provide access to a straightforward

retirement savings option for employees at administratively low cost and it would provide people who currently do not participate in a pension plan a retirement savings option. More people would benefit from the lower investment management costs that result from the economies of scale of membership in large pooled pension plans, employees would be able to move their accumulated benefits from job to job and the PRPP would ascertain that funds are invested in the best interests of the plan members.

I urge all members of the House to support this very important bill. At this time, I move:

That this question be now put.

•(1325)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before this debate comes to an end—to quickly in my opinion—I would like to speak a little bit about the fact that, in my riding, retirees from Fraser Papers lost 40% of their pension fund when the parent company declared bankruptcy.

How do the Conservatives think that this will help the Fraser Papers employees who lost 40% of their pension fund after working their entire lives? They had a good retirement fund that belonged to them. Then, all of a sudden, the company declares bankruptcy and all the money vanishes. I spoke to many employees who were about 60 years old and close to retirement.

The NDP is proposing good options that would help to improve Canada's retirement system. For example, the NDP proposed that changes be made to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, a federal law. However, the Conservatives do not understand what is happening on the ground. They are so out of touch that they think their measure will really solve the problem.

[*English*]

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, this is a new initiative that would respond to what hundreds of thousands of Canadians across this country have asked. It would assist them along the way.

I would suggest to the hon. member from the New Democratic Party that if she feels as passionately as she spoke about seniors, perhaps she could urge some members in her party to finally vote for something that would benefit seniors rather than vote against every single positive measure that our government has put forward that would benefit seniors in this country from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to comment on the bigger picture of pensions.

We recognize that this would assist very few Canadians. No doubt, it would be of great assistance to those few. However, there is a great deal of concern for the pensions of all Canadians; in particular, the government's decision to increase the age of retirement, through OAS payments, from 65 to 67.

Government Orders

The member commented on the importance of pension issues. Surely to goodness he would recognize many of his constituents, some would argue most of his constituents, would still say we should provide the opportunity for people to retire at age 65 instead of at age 67. Would he agree with me that changing that retirement age from 65 to 67 would be the wrong direction?

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the premise with which my hon. colleague set up his question.

The PRPP that would be implemented with Bill C-25 currently proposed in the House would not benefit only very few, as he says. Perhaps he did not listen to some of my speech. Sixty per cent of Canadians do not have a pension plan today. Sixty per cent of the country's population is not very few people.

With respect to the age limit for OAS being increased from 65 to 67, we have said repeatedly in this House, and I know the hon. member has heard it, we are concerned about the sustainability of the program. We want to ensure that OAS is there, not only for people who are currently retiring today, but for our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. It is just responsible government to ensure that our programs are well funded into the future for our families of all ages.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like the other hon. members, I am going to give a speech on the pooled registered pension plans act. I am going to share my time with the member for Churchill.

First, I would like to extend my thanks to the member for London—Fanshawe, the NDP critic on this bill. Second, I would like to thank all the hon. members for their various comments on the government bill that we are debating today at third reading. This is a very important topic, one that Canadians are really concerned about.

As we heard earlier, according to the Conference Board of Canada, 1.6 million seniors live in poverty in Canada, and, according to the Canadian Labour Congress, 12 million Canadians lack a workplace pension plan. This is food for thought.

It is amazing to see how two events can be interrelated. Today we are going to debate a special bill tabled in this House by the Minister of Labour less than 24 hours ago. According to the representatives from Teamsters Canada, this special legislation infringes on the freedom to negotiate working conditions. You may wonder how this legislation is related to pooled registered pension plans. Well, the Canadian Pacific conflict basically has to do with pensions and management's wish to revise the system in order to keep up with its competitors.

The vice-president of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference said the company “wants to take the money from our pension plan and give it to the shareholders”. In a democratic country like Canada, the right to retire in dignity after working your whole life is absolutely non-negotiable. So, yes, that is what we are talking about today.

Since 2006, the Conservative government has been introducing measures to amend Canadians' retirement security; these measures have been highly criticized. Just look at the retirement age, which

will go from 65 to 67 in 13 years, when people who are 54 now will be 67. Why introduce this measure when in 13 years there will be less demand? Fewer people will be taking their retirement in 13 years than now. The baby boomers will have already retired by then.

Another measure they implemented was the tax-free savings account. The TFSA may be a good option for those who have the money to contribute to it. There is some debate as to whether the contribution limits should be increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Nonetheless, what is the purpose of this vehicle? According to a recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, an ING Direct survey found that only 41% of Canadians have a TFSA. Nearly half of them earn \$100,000 or more a year and only 24% of those surveyed said that they were using their TFSA to save for their retirement.

I have a TFSA. I was contributing to it bit by bit and it currently has \$1,700. In fact, it is money I was saving for a rainy day: in case my washing machine or refrigerator broke down or something. I never considered using the TFSA for my retirement. I was earning a modest income and I never thought that \$1,700 would go very far in providing me with a comfortable retirement.

We cannot rely on such savings to provide a decent retirement. I often wondered why the government developed such a measure. The government collects less tax, which leaves less money for investing in repairing bridges, ports and airports, in research and development or even in transfers to the provinces in their areas of jurisdiction. After I thought about it, I remembered that, previously, taxing the savings of the rich and the not so rich resulted in the flight of capital and the use of tax havens. That is quite likely why TFSAs exist: to keep our currency in our banks.

It is time for this government to take some real action to improve retirement security for the 12 million Canadians who do not currently have pension plans through their employers. Bill C-25 will not accomplish that goal. Canadians do not need another voluntary private savings plan. They need real measures that will ensure that they can retire with enough savings to live through their old age with the money they need to be able to dress, house and feed themselves. These are basic needs.

• (1335)

Canadians are wary, and rightly so. Pooled registered pension plans are risky. With this kind of plan, employees set aside funds throughout their entire working lives, and those funds are invested in stocks, bonds, mutual funds and so on. Investment income depends entirely on market fluctuations. Thus, employees are the ones who absorb all of the financial risk associated with stock market ups and downs.

In addition, clause 30 of the bill states:

30. An employer is not liable for the acts and omissions of the administrator.

So, can someone tell me who is liable?

Government Orders

On the one hand, workers are obliged to contribute, while employers, on the other hand, are not, and the funds are subject to stock market fluctuations.

Can someone tell me who assumes the risk, if not the worker?

Quebeckers remember all too well certain recent predators, the kind we call white collar criminals. Some institutions get bad press because they are making huge profits, which they give out as bonuses at the end of the fiscal year.

The NDP wants to increase CPP contributions. We support a pension fund for all Canadians. It is time to get to work on that. However, we do not want a pension fund that fluctuates with the stock market and where workers' savings will diminish when it is time for them to retire.

We are asking that the government secure Canadians' pension funds.

Why does the government not want to study this solution even though seven provinces have agreed to expand the Canada pension plan?

The NDP is being proactive and working on job creation so that Canadians can save. The more workers earn, the more they can save.

The PRPP bill does not provide a fixed benefit, could run out of money if we live longer than expected and is not indexed. Employers and employees can withdraw from the plan, but companies are not required to contribute.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is in regard to pensions in general. In regard to the pool itself, we have all recognized, in particular those within our party, the importance of the CPP, the GIS and the OAS and how it is critically important that the federal government demonstrates some leadership that would ultimately see the level of money seniors receive increase, and that we continue to lobby to ensure we have a retirement option at age 65.

Even though this bill is far from perfect, it is a tool that some seniors might be able to use. Many provincial governments are on side with this. Why would the member oppose this particular tool, albeit small, for some individuals who would be able to benefit from it? Why would the NDP oppose that?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his very pertinent question.

We are not opposed to a pension fund for people who have worked their entire lives. The provinces support expanding the Canada pension plan. That is excellent. What I am saying is that we have to ensure that the risk of investing this money in the stock market must be secured. If we took the Canada pension plan—the employer contribution and the employee contribution—and sheltered it in trust, people would be much more inclined to contribute than if employers were entitled to withdraw funds at some point.

At present, Canadian Pacific workers risk losing their life savings. They risk losing everything, or part of their pension fund, which is what happened to employees of White Birch Paper in Quebec.

• (1340)

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that a pension scheme like the one announced in the bill we are debating today clearly puts women at a disadvantage, unlike the NDP's solution of enhancing the public plan.

Given the hon. member's remarkable commitment to causes that affect women specifically, I would ask her to briefly comment on this matter.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member.

Of all seniors, women are among the poorest. In terms of pensions, we are well aware that women live longer than men. Currently, many of them have no pensions for their old age and they are pushing shopping carts with no idea of what they are going to put in them in order to survive.

This is a huge phenomenon in our society. Women's salaries are lower. I am sure that most of the 20 million Canadians without a pension fund are women. Women will become poorer when they retire. And they live longer.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to my NDP colleagues' speeches and one of the things that has become clear to me is that the NDP is simply against providing choice to Canadians who want to look after their retirement income.

The member asked who was responsible. I would ask the NDP member about personal responsibility. When we are looking at our retirement income, I think it behooves us all to have a balanced approach. The NDP wants to put all the eggs into one basket, that being the Canada pension plan, which, as my colleagues have said, is one of the best plans in the world.

However, we are seeing problems in Greece and Europe. Canada is fortunate right now to have a Conservative government and an economy that is moving forward so well. However, things could happen in the future that Canadians could have no control over and an irresponsible government that could be in power.

I would like to know what my colleague has against choice. What does she have against allowing Canadians to take responsibility for their own retirement income instead of rolling the dice and perhaps later on there could be an irresponsible government in power that could blow the whole deal?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's statement is completely false. This is about taking responsibility and managing risk. We have absolutely nothing against the fact that workers have a retirement fund and even that employers contribute to the fund if that is possible too. I feel that the hon. member's premise is completely false.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand here, along with members of my party, to express our opposition to Bill C-25 and speak to how this is a hasty attempt by the government to cobble together what the Conservatives say is an effort toward establishing retirement security.

However, we see it as just that, a hasty attempt and one that deviates from the real issue here and the kind of lack of retirement security that Canadians are facing and the way in which the government is weakening the foundations of our retirement system in Canada. I will say a few words specifically on this bill today and get more into that later.

The legislation would not guarantee an actual pension. We would like to refer to it more as a savings scheme. Among other things, the bill would create a type of savings scheme that would pool the funds in members' accounts to achieve lower costs in relation to investment management and plan administration. As we know, these savings schemes are being called pooled registered pension plans.

The bill is designed to appeal to the self-employed and workers at small and mid-sized firms and also companies that often lack the means by which to administer a private sector plan. All of the things that have been said as being key goals of the government, we find the bill misses the mark.

Our position is that Bill C-25 fails to protect retirement security because it encourages families to gamble even more of their retirement savings on failing stock markets. People who have watched their RRSPs plummet over the past year know how risky savings tied to the stock market can be. Telling families to double down on the same system that is already failing them shows how out of touch the government is.

We know the Conservatives are not fond of learning from history, facts, science, et cetera, but we can simply look at the most recent history. We know that this attempt to establish retirement security would make Canadians and their savings more vulnerable. In today's global markets, that is an unacceptable proposition. We would like to see the government say no to encouraging greater vulnerability and yes to more stability when it comes to retirement savings.

For the past three years, our party has championed a suite of retirement income security proposals. We have proposed doubling guaranteed Canada and Quebec pension plan benefits to a maximum of \$1,920 each month. Growing the CPP and QPP is simply the best and lowest cost pension reform option available. Research has indicated that advocacy groups that speak on behalf of seniors have indicated that. We have suggested that working with the provinces to build in the flexibility for individuals and their employers to make voluntary contributions to individual public pension accounts is also critical. The provinces have explicitly stated that they want to come to the table and work with the federal government in order to establish greater retirement security for Canadians.

We have proposed amending the federal bankruptcy legislation to move pensioners and long-term disability recipients to the front of the line of creditors when their employers enter court protection or declare bankruptcy. Numerous times a year, we are seeing large

employers just pick up and leave. It is all the workers, particularly the more vulnerable workers, who are ultimately paying the price by losing the investments they made into their pension system and facing a very challenging future.

We have proposed increasing the annual guaranteed income supplement to a sufficient level to lift every senior in Canada out of poverty immediately.

All of those measures have received incredible accolades from various organizations, from stakeholders, from seniors and from people who are looking ahead at their retirement prospects. They have said that they want to see these kinds of proposals put into action by the government.

● (1345)

I will read some of what has been said. Ms. Susan Eng, the vice president for advocacy at CARP, an organization that is outspoken when it comes to retirees in Canada, said:

CARP remains committed to improving retirement benefits for the current crop of seniors, including increasing CPP, OAS and GIS payments, getting a moratorium on RRIF withdrawals, making access to Tax-Free Savings Accounts retroactive and lobbying to remove the HST on seniors' energy bills.

These are a number of very progressive measures. We have not seen the government take leadership when it comes to a variety of these measures.

If we turn to what we are looking at more broadly, it is the way in which the government is weakening the foundations of our pension system. We do not have to look much further than the budget the government tabled some short weeks ago. In fact, the changes to OAS will have a direct impact on seniors, many of whom are already struggling.

As the status of women critic, I know particularly the devastating impact that the changes to OAS will have on many women, for whom OAS is an income they are dependent on at a time when many of them face a situation of poverty. We are looking at that and the way in which the government is standing by and allowing corporations to pull out of Canada, pulling away from agreements they have made with Canadians.

I think of Vale in my hometown of Thompson. It committed to the federal government to increase employment. However, instead of creating jobs, it is pulling out the value-added jobs in our community, and the government has done nothing to stop it.

I think of Hamilton where the workers at Stelco, now U.S. Steel, were dealt the blow when their jobs were shipped away from Canada. The government went as far as to take U.S. Steel to court and then withdrew the case even though it had grounds to keep going.

That is the way the government treats Canadians who are simply contributing to our economy, raising families and building communities. Many of them are investing in a pension system that the government is seeking to take away.

Government Orders

On a host of measures, the government has stood by while jobs have been shipped out. It has taken direct action to attack our pension systems. It has gone so far as to say, actually a misnomer, that somehow our pension system, whether it is CPP or OAS, suffers from instability. This is something that researcher after researcher has indicated is simply not the case. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer stated the very same thing on numerous occasions. Yet the government fails to accept the research, fails to accept the proof and instead further exposes Canadians to greater vulnerability, to a future where poverty and impoverishment at a senior age is a reality.

Perhaps the saddest of impacts will be on my generation, a generation that is just a few years into the workplace, if people have been able to find a decent job, many of whom are unable to invest in a proper pension system and simply do not have the supports to do so.

Instead of having a government that will stand by and seek to strengthen our public pension system, a universal pension system that supports all Canadians, it is standing by and making life more difficult for future generations, for seniors of today, for people who are looking at their retirement and hoping to see a government that is going to stand up for them. Unfortunately, that is not what we have in the Conservative government.

I am proud to be part of a party, the NDP, that has always been at the forefront of fighting for true retirement security and dignity for all Canadians.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for a speech that was up to her usual standards of excellence.

I would like to go back to a comment by a member opposite and give her an opportunity to respond.

He said that he was proud of the fact that the Conservative government is not taking any risks, but the real threat is not an NDP government; the real threat is a government that does nothing to fix the problem. For example, one issue that comes up often when I talk to my constituents is Nortel. In that situation, there were no measures in place to protect what people had saved for their retirement. The government did nothing to punish a corporation that really put people in a difficult position.

My colleague talked about the NDP's proposal for putting an end to that kind of injustice and ensuring people's financial security. Contrary to what the member opposite said, the NDP's agenda is retirement security, not risk-taking.

I would like my colleague to expand further on that idea.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his hard work and the issues he raised in his question.

Obviously, the messages the government is sending have nothing to do with the reality of Canada's pension system. Many experts have stated publicly that the public pension system and the supplement are very solid, that they are sustainable and that young Canadians can depend on them for their retirement down the road.

Instead of listening to those experts, the government is trying to feed us its own line, which is not based on evidence or research. That is a fundamentally flawed way to govern in general and certainly for the future of our country.

• (1355)

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the one thing I found quite surprising in the speech of my colleague was her suggestion that we should increase the guaranteed income supplement to seniors. This is rather troubling, because when we did make the largest increase in two decades to the guaranteed income supplement, she, and all of her party, voted against that.

Has she now changed her mind?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, if the member across had heard in more detail what I said, the point was about lifting every senior out of poverty. That is exactly what the government did not do. In fact, it continues to not do that every day.

We hear the government's fury and feigned indignation. I would like to see that same kind of energy put toward the ultimate goal of ensuring that seniors live in dignity, and that young people, who are looking ahead to a pretty insecure situation when it comes to retirement down the line, are part of the solution. I would like to see the government seek to eradicate poverty among seniors and all Canadians and truly establish a strong foundation for all Canadians' retirement.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have indicated in the past that the Liberal Party has acknowledged as a foundation of our pension programs CPP, OAS and GIS, the guaranteed income supplement, and we believe in those programs. We believe they need to be enhanced and protected.

We consider this pool plan to be a very small tool that will assist some Canadians as a complement to their pension programs. I understand even NDP administrations in provincial governments have recognized the value of this as being a small tool. Why would the NDP oppose a small tool that would at least help some to supplement their pensions?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to listen to the speech I put forward and the various points that our caucus, our team, has put forward in the House and ultimately join us in asking the government to stand and present an act on a real retirement security action plan, one that will actually make a difference in the lives of all seniors, that will lift all seniors out of poverty and ensure the next generations of Canadian pensioners will have real pensions to look forward to.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***RECREATIONAL BOATING INDUSTRY**

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand today to welcome members of the National Marine Manufacturers Association who are in Ottawa today meeting with parliamentarians on the Hill.

NMMA Canada is the nation's leading trade association representing boat, marine engine and accessory manufacturers. Collectively, NMMA members manufacture an estimated 80% of the marine products used in North America.

NMMA is a unifying force and a powerful voice for the recreational boating industry, working to strengthen and grow boating in many regions and ridings across Canada.

The recreational boating industry's economic impact is nearly \$15 billion, generated through creating local jobs and enabling small businesses in regions across the country.

I ask all parliamentarians to join me in recognizing the association's important contribution to economic growth and tourism in Canada. I would also like to remind members of the reception being held later today at 5:30 p.m. in room 256-S in the Centre Block.

* * *

• (1400)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has had many shining moments, but we have also had our dark chapters. Later, governments apologized and took responsibility for them. An example is the residential schools apology.

Despite that apology, there are still survivors that have yet to have their cases addressed. This includes the experimental Eskimos. In the 1960s, seven Inuit children were removed from their homes and sent to live with families in Ottawa. The government wanted to see if Inuit children could succeed in a formal education system. They were removed from their families, communities and their culture, just as we residential school survivors were.

When they came to make their claims under the residential school settlement, they were told that their experience was not within the criteria for claims. They were forced to turn to the courts, where they have been for four years. The government has fought them at every turn, denying them an apology and compensation that they are due.

I call upon the government to stop its obstruction and give these survivors their basic dignity.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back in 1953 when Barrie resident Albert Stein was 15 years old, he suffered a terrible spinal injury after diving off a boat into shallow water. With

no feeling from the neck down, young Albert was told he would be a quadriplegic for the rest of his life.

Albert worked tirelessly in rehab and started to regain mobility in his arms. He began to take steps with the help of crutches and then he began to walk short distances with leg braces. There was no slowing down Albert.

Albert has served for six years on Barrie's accessibility committee and now sits on the accessibility committees for the county of Simcoe, the Simcoe county District School Board, the Royal Victoria Hospital and the March of Dimes. He is also a board director for the Independent Living Services for Simcoe Muskoka as well as chairman of the Simcoe County Accessibility Network.

Earlier this month, I was incredibly honoured to announce to my riding of Barrie that Albert Stein was the recipient of the prestigious 2011 Robert Kerr Accessibility Award for his tireless volunteer work promoting better accessibility for disabled persons everywhere.

* * *

CONFERENCE BOARD OF CANADA PRESIDENT

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next month, after 12 years on the job, Dr. Anne Golden will leave her post as president and CEO of the Conference Board of Canada.

This, combined with her 14 years as president of Toronto's United Way, her past roles as special adviser to the provincial leader of the opposition and as research coordinator for the Bureau of Municipal Research, has solidified her reputation as a truly great Canadian.

Anne's work on files such as homelessness and the cities agenda have made a real difference in Canada, something that has been recognized with an appointment to the Order of Canada, eight honorary doctorates, the Jane Jacobs Lifetime of Achievement Award, the Urban Leadership Award for City Engagement and the WXN's Most Powerful Women citation.

Together, these honours say one important thing. I thank her for years of dedication to Canada. I wish her the best in the years ahead.

* * *

CYCLING

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, Victorians celebrated as our own Ryder Hesjedal took the lead during a nail-biting final stage of the Giro d'Italia and won. It is the first Grand Tour victory for a Canadian athlete.

Hesjedal knows the importance of hard work and determination. For years, he trained on the wealth of cycling routes in the Victoria area that make it one of the best places in the world to live, work and ride, with the highest per capita modal share of bike commuters in the country.

Statements by Members

Ryder has contributed tremendously to our community and has lent his name and his efforts to the Ryder Hesjedal Tour de Victoria, encouraging people of all fitness levels to get active by participating in a non-competitive cycling event. The thousands of us who participated two years ago were excited to see Ryder lead the ride.

This is Bike to Work Week. I congratulate Ryder on behalf of all Victorians. We rejoice with him and his family.

* * *

CALGARY HOMELESS FOUNDATION

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2008, the Calgary Homeless Foundation set out to end homelessness in Calgary within 10 years. It is year three, and the organization is well on its way to achieving its goal. The assistance to the homeless of Calgary has resulted in a reduction of 40% in the use of the public social system in Calgary, emergency room visits by the homeless have decreased by 50% and interactions with police are down by 60%.

Of the individuals who are housed by the Calgary Homeless Foundation, 92% have retained their residence. The Calgary Homeless Foundation has increased its housing units to 323, with over 100 more under construction.

The Calgary Homeless Foundation has also launched a housing plan to end youth homelessness, aboriginal housing programs and programs that track homelessness, and it has actively engaged the private sector for funding and leverage. These programs, the success of social organizations in co-operating, and funding from private and public sectors have helped 11 other Canadian cities come forward with their own plans to end homelessness.

I would like to congratulate the staff and volunteers of the Calgary Homeless Foundation for their dedication and commitment to end homelessness.

* * *

●(1405)

CABLE HALL OF FAME

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to recognize yet another honour in a long list of accomplishments for a proud Canadian. Mr. Phil Lind, vice-chairman of Rogers Communications, was inducted into the Cable Hall of Fame on May 21. He joins his friend and mentor Mr. Ted Rogers and Mr. J.R. Shaw as the only Canadians in the Cable Hall of Fame.

Mr. Lind was recognized for his key role in the growth and expansion of one of Canada's cable, broadcasting and telecommunications giants. His vision, foresight and determination were key to Rogers becoming a truly great Canadian success story.

On October 18, 2001, Mr. Lind was awarded the Order of Canada for his work in championing the development of multilingual, multicultural and specialty programming, such as community channels and CPAC. He has dedicated his life to many public causes that have all led to the betterment of Canada.

On behalf of this House, I salute, congratulate and thank Mr. Phil Lind, a truly great Canadian.

ST. JOHN'S REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 22, 2012, I had the honour of attending the 75th anniversary of the St. John's Rehabilitation Hospital in my riding of Willowdale.

For more than 75 years, St. John's Rehabilitation Hospital has offered rehabilitation programs for people recovering from amputations, traumatic injuries, burns, cardiovascular surgery, strokes, transplants, cancer and complex neurological and orthopedic conditions. The specialized treatment that is offered is possible because of the great staff at St. John's.

St. John's has expanded from 64 to 160 beds and cares for about 2,700 in-patients annually, when it once only accommodated 716. This is truly indicative of the continuing service this facility proudly provides to the community.

The spiritual care that is offered by the Sisters of St. John the Divine is exceptional and has proven to be effective in the healing of patients. Their vision of health care service is shared by the commitment of our government to a publicly funded, universally accessible health care system.

I am proud to represent the community that is home to this extraordinary facility. I wish it a very happy 75th anniversary and continued success for another 75 years.

* * *

POVERTY

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, next Thursday in my riding of Hamilton Centre, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, the Hamilton Legal Clinic, and the McMaster Poverty Initiative will be co-sponsoring an event entitled Claiming and Enforcing the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living.

Born from a sense of frustration with the continued cuts to services by both federal and provincial governments and of frustration with the diminishing ability of social programs to keep our most marginalized citizens from falling further into poverty, the event will also discuss the Conservative government's increasing trend of refusing to live up to its obligations under international agreements.

This special evening will include a talk from international law and human rights expert Bruce Porter from the Social Rights and Advocacy Centre, as well as a panel that will include economist and McMaster University professor Dr. Atif Kubursi and poverty round table member Laura Cattari.

I congratulate these groups, wish them a successful event, and thank them for their continued compassion and unrelenting efforts to eradicate the scourge of poverty in our community and in our country.

JAN DE VRIES

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in memory of a great Canadian from my riding of Pickering—Scarborough East who passed away this past weekend. A veteran of the Second World War, Mr. Jan de Vries, an Order of Canada recipient, served with the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. He parachuted into Normandy on D-Day and later parachuted over the Rhine River into Germany in 1945.

As a founding member of the Living History Speakers Bureau and as a member of the Memory Project, he has kept alive the stories of Canadian veterans by visiting schools, youth groups and cadet units.

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion Association, the Juno Beach Centre Association and the Corporal Fred Topham Victoria Cross Fundraising campaign have all benefited from his determination and leadership. Under his leadership, the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion Association installed memorial plaques in Europe to commemorate their battle areas.

In June 2004, Mr. de Vries was presented with the French Legion of Honour medal by President Jacques Chirac.

He was a distinguished soldier and an ardent keeper of the flame. Lest we forget.

* * *

• (1410)

FOREST FIRE EMERGENCY CREWS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past week the people of Timmins—James Bay saw heroism up close. Our region was under threat from numerous fires, and we had over 1,500 people evacuated from the various fire zones.

In the case of Kirkland Lake 8, the fire reached within three kilometres of the town, and for nearly a week the emergency officials not only had to fight the fire but also had to prepare for the possible evacuation of an entire community. It was an enormous undertaking.

In the case of Timmins 9, this was a major firestorm that drew on all the resources of our provincial MNR fire crews. It was touch and go for days.

I had the great honour of working closely with the emergency teams, and their professionalism and dedication were beyond compare. I specifically want to thank the MNR crews, emergency measures, municipal officials, police, hydro, Red Cross and the many volunteers.

It is going to be a long, hot summer. I would like to thank, on behalf of the New Democratic caucus, all of Canada's fire crews who put their lives on the line in the summer to make sure that our northern communities are safe.

* * *

GLOBAL CENTRE FOR PLURALISM

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night His Highness the Aga Khan hosted Her Excellency Roza Otunbayeva for a speech at the Global Centre for Pluralism.

Statements by Members

Several Conservative ministers, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, were in attendance. They later joined Ms. Otunbayeva and the Aga Khan for dinner.

In her public lecture, Ms. Otunbayeva spoke eloquently about the challenges of promoting pluralism in the Kyrgyz Republic. Following unrest in 2010, Ms. Otunbayeva provided strong, stable leadership in challenging times. In many ways, Ms. Otunbayeva is the Margaret Thatcher of central Asia. She helped usher in parliamentary elections and a peaceful transition of power following her interim presidency. A video of her lecture will be posted on the Global Centre for Pluralism website, and I encourage all Canadians to watch her speech.

Our Conservative government has invested millions of dollars in the Global Centre for Pluralism and supports what His Highness is doing. Our Conservative government has also welcomed Ismaili refugees to Canada from central Asia, and our government looks forward to collaborating with His Highness the Aga Khan in the future.

* * *

OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently returned from the annual Oslo Freedom Forum, described as the Davos of human rights, an inspired and inspiring gathering of pioneers and leaders, from former presidents to grassroots activists, who are involved in advocacy, policy, media, business and technology. They came together to bring humanitarian causes to the forefront of the global agenda; to shine a spotlight on repressed societies that warrant exposure; and to to enlarge, enhance and empower the international struggle for freedom. This year the forum engaged in a series of compelling and interactive exchanges on the Arab uprising, one year later; lessons learned from case studies of emblematic political prisoners; slavery in the shadows; and the impact of new technologies and paradigms in the protection of human rights.

We are witness to a growing criminalization of dissent, to systematic and systemic assaults on human rights and to a quarantining of human rights that is too often ignored, marginalized or sanitized.

Oslo took us out of the shadows of repression into the sunshine and the struggle for freedom, reminding us all of our individual and collective responsibilities for the promotion and protection of human rights at home and abroad, and particularly in the shadows of repression.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP agriculture critic has made unacceptable accusations against Canadian meat producers, claiming that road kill and dead stock would be allowed into the processing system.

Oral Questions

Nothing could be further from the truth. The beef producers I represent have made Alberta beef the world standard.

The NDP allegations have threatened our world-renowned reputation. Producers in Quebec are appalled that the NDP leaders would have the audacity to make such accusations against Quebec pork.

This is the same New Democratic Party that is completely wrong in attacking Canada's energy and natural resource sector. It is now also recklessly hurting Canada's largest manufacturing sector with its wildly irresponsible and false claims.

The number of food inspectors on the front line is still growing, with \$51 million from the economic action plan 2012. Of course, the NDP voted against it.

Our Conservative government is focused on protecting the economy, jobs and the quality—

• (1415)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Vancouver East.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday during a meeting with his constituents, the member for Kootenay—Columbia offered Canadians a sobering glimpse into the life of a Conservative backbencher.

He described how Conservative MPs were powerless to stand up for their constituents and admitted that he could not explain the details of the Conservative's Trojan Horse budget bill.

I remember a time when Conservatives allowed dissent, a time when that Prime Minister promised to give backbenchers a real voice, back in the forgotten days when they claimed to stand for the grassroots and believed in democratic reform.

Now the Conservative PMO silences dissenting voices—not just scientists and the media, but even their own members. Last week's heavy-handed overreaction by the PMO is bad for Canadian democracy.

How can Canadians trust that this Prime Minister will listen to their concerns when he is not even willing to listen to the concerns of his own MPs?

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems these are lonely times for the Liberal MPs huddled in the far corner of the House of Commons. Apparently it is getting harder and harder to find friends.

At the special committee our government created to study the responsible resource development section of the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, all parties had the opportunity to call witnesses.

Can members guess who the Liberal Party called? Did it call an independent expert in the field? Did it call a friendly NGO to defend its carbon tax, which has already been rejected by Canadians? Did it

call an industry representative or an academic to discuss how this budget would create jobs and growth?

No, no, and no.

The Liberals could have called anyone in Canada, and they chose to call the Liberal member for Ottawa South.

That is right. When the Liberals were given a chance to hear from anyone they wanted regarding this important legislation, they chose to hear from themselves.

I guess even—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has a few seconds to finish his statement.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals had a chance to hear from anyone they wanted, regarding this important legislation, they chose to hear from themselves.

I guess even when they are talking to themselves, it is good have someone to listen.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative EI cuts will not only devastate seasonal workers, they will also hit Canadians working on temporary contracts, hundreds of thousands of people, not seasonal workers but those in precarious term jobs, at least in their own fields. These people work hard, pay into EI and should be able to access EI when they need it. Now they will be forced by the Conservatives to either take a 30% permanent pay cut or be kicked off EI.

Why is the Prime Minister going to force the most vulnerable workers into an even more precarious position?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that in many parts of the country, people have difficulty finding work, particularly in some parts of the country where much of the economy is seasonal and people have difficulty finding work off season. Of course, EI will be there for people who cannot find a job.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister does not seem to want to understand is that taking employment insurance benefits away from unemployed workers will not help them find jobs. This objective simply does not make any sense.

Oral Questions

According to what the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development said last week, the real objective is to provide the McDonald's restaurants of this world with cheap labour. She named McDonald's. These workers will be forced to abandon their careers and skills and take a 30% pay cut. That will be their only choice.

Who is supposed to benefit from this reform—the workers or McDonald's?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since we are talking about jobs, I have to say that I just attended the G8 summit and Canada has the best track record for job creation of all G8 nations. It is this government's policies that are helping workers to find jobs. For those who are unable to do so, there will be employment insurance benefits.

• (1420)

[English]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is not a single aspect of this plan that will actually help anyone find a job. What unemployed Canadians can look forward to are threatening emails from the Conservative government telling them what low-paying jobs they must now apply for, at least until they get kicked off EI and then they will not even be able to pay for their Internet connections any more.

Can the Prime Minister explain why the Conservatives want to force unemployed workers to choose between a 30% pay cut or the EI benefits they have paid for and they deserve?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, of course, it is the policies of this government which are helping Canadians get jobs. We have 750,000 more people working today than we did during the recession. I just attended the G8, where we have the best job creation record among that group of countries. We will continue to do our best to try and put some resources into helping people find jobs. At the same time, for those who still cannot find work in their seasonal industries and seasonal parts of the economy where people have difficulty finding work, there will, of course, be employment insurance as a safety net for those people.

* * *

[Translation]

PENSION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Conservatives are attacking not only the unemployed, but also seniors.

The census data released this morning show that Canada is aging and that even more seniors are going to need old age security in the coming years. Seniors have followed the rules all their lives, but the Conservatives are now robbing them of \$10 billion to make up for the F-35 budget deficit.

Why are the Conservatives making tomorrow's seniors pay for their mismanagement?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the census shows that the population is aging faster than before, but it is also true that

those numbers show that the old age security program is not sustainable in the long term.

[English]

Furthermore, a number of organizations agree, for example the Fraser Institute; The Institute for Public Sector Accountability; David Dodge, economist and former governor of the Bank of Canada; Fred Vettese, chief actuary for the consulting firm Morneau Shepell; the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is simply wrong. Expert after expert says that OAS is sustainable. A new report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer reveals that Conservative budget cuts are actually twice what they have admitted publicly, and now Conservatives are refusing to share even basic information with the PBO. Workers waiting to hear about the future of their jobs deserve the truth. The government has a legal obligation to provide information to the PBO.

Why are Conservatives so hell-bent on keeping Canadians in the dark about their planned budget cuts? Why?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that we will continue to report to Parliament and through Parliament to Canadians through the normal means, which includes the quarterly financial reports, the estimates, the public accounts. All of these reports will be publicly available in due course.

They will report that we are on track with budget 2012 to deliver jobs and opportunities to Canadians. We are on track to reduce the deficit to zero in a moderate fashion. We are on track with all of our promises in the campaign.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Premier Dunderdale of Newfoundland is quoted as having said this about the situation with respect to employment insurance, "What is it that we have to do down here to get your attention? We try to co-operate; it doesn't work. We vote for you; it doesn't work. We don't vote for you; it doesn't work. What is it?"

The premier is expressing a frustration that is shared by other Atlantic premiers, indeed by premiers across the country, with respect to the lack of consultation by those jurisdictions that are going to have to pay the price for this downloading.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to meet with Premier Dunderdale and the other premiers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I meet with premiers all the time.

Oral Questions

In terms of the specifics here, no one is suggesting any downloading, quite on the contrary. We want to make sure the people who are getting EI or thinking of getting EI have the opportunity to work in the labour market. There are many cases where those labour market opportunities are not being taken advantage of and these reforms are part of a package to accomplish that. It is good for all parts of the country, including Newfoundland and Labrador.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Prime Minister is not prepared to recognize the reality of the situation. If people cannot get employment insurance benefits, they will turn to the provinces for welfare. History clearly shows that that is what happens. That is why the premiers are insisting on discussing the repercussions of these cuts on the provinces.

I am asking the Prime Minister directly. Is he prepared to meet this country's premiers in order to deal with this problem, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has one of the best job creation records in the entire developed world.

We want to make it possible for Canadians to fill existing positions. For example, if people are not able to find work in areas where employment is seasonal, we will make sure that employment insurance is available to them.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is almost as if these changes are being put out on the back of an envelope.

We still do not have the regulations that are in place. It is one of the reasons that we are hearing not just from employees who are concerned and not just from seasonal workers. We are hearing from farmers, from farm organizations right across the country, who are deeply concerned about the impact of these changes on their own employment practices with respect to temporary permits of people coming in from offshore.

Could the Prime Minister tell us why he will not withdraw these suggestions until such time as he has established a stronger national consensus for the kind of changes that this requires?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these changes are widely supported by employers.

Our philosophy here is different than that on the other side. We want to make sure people can get jobs when jobs are available rather than employment insurance. We want to make sure that when jobs are available Canadians get first crack at those jobs, not temporary foreign workers.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all know what usually happens when there is a labour shortage: salaries increase. That is the principle of supply and demand.

However, the Conservatives' plan to reform employment insurance will put downward pressure on the salaries of workers across Canada. This will be very bad for the economy. If EI is to be

reformed, the changes should target accessibility and the processing of applications.

Why are the Conservatives ignoring the real problems?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the real question is this: why does the opposition want to give jobs to foreign workers rather than to Canadians?

The Conservatives want to help Canadians find jobs and apply for positions that exist in their regions and in their areas of expertise. This will help Canadians, before employers turn to foreign workers to fill those jobs.

We want to help Canadians because that is the best thing to do.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year, the Conservatives forced Mexican nationals wishing to work in Canada to obtain a visa in order to restrict their entry.

The Conservatives want to connect people to jobs by sending emails and text messages, but they have yet to say what they will do about families living below the poverty line who do not have cell phones or Internet access.

People in outlying regions have also been abandoned, whether they work in the fishery, tourism or forestry.

Why is this government using EI reform to attack communities that make their living from tourism?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a labour shortage in many sectors and areas across Canada. In those regions, there are often unemployed workers who are unaware of the jobs that are available. We will help these people find these jobs. We will notify them so that they can have jobs that pay more than employment insurance. This will improve their well-being and that of their families and our country.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's attack on rural Canadians is shameful. In towns that rely on seasonal industries like the fisheries, agriculture, tourism—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain has the floor.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, in towns that rely on seasonal industries like the fisheries, agriculture, tourism or forestry, Conservative EI changes would exacerbate the exodus of workers from their communities. The skills shortages left behind would be permanent and the minister will not even consult with the industries hardest hit.

Oral Questions

Why are the Conservatives so intent on pushing through these reckless changes that would hurt so many rural communities?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was explaining to the hon. member in the elevator just this afternoon, we are working on helping rural Canadians find jobs that they may not be aware of in their areas. We want to ensure that they know what jobs are there, in their local area within their skills range so they can access them so they and their families would be better off. If they cannot find jobs within their field in their area, EI would be there to support them.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one conversation with me in the elevator is not a public consultation. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development claims that there have been consultations and yet she could not name a single EI-specific consultation anywhere, any time. EI is not just a safety net—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain still has the floor.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, EI is not just a safety net for workers. Entire industries rely on it.

When will the minister hold public consultations with the workers, industries and communities affected? When will she follow the Minister of Finance's advice and talk to the provinces that would be hardest hit?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are supporting those provinces. We would help their workers, particularly their seasonal workers, become aware of jobs that are available to them for which they are qualified in their local area in the off season. That way, they could have access to those jobs, earning more money for themselves and looking after their families better. We would make other changes to EI as well to make sure that part-time work is better than being on EI, because we know that part-time work often leads to full-time work. When that happens, the workers win, the employers win, the families win and so does our country.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again Canadians see the abuses of entitlement that come from the lack of accountability of public boards and agencies. Let us look at the Old Port of Montreal, where the taxpayers were stiffed with the cost for a South Seas cruise and an extended vacation. What did we get for all of our money? A bunch of stock pictures they could have taken off Google.

Canadians are tired of this excess. Will the government ask the Old Port to ensure that this \$10,000 is not on the taxpayers' dime? What steps will the Conservatives take to rein in this system of buddy entitlement at these ports?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us in the House share our concern about these expenditures. We have asked the Auditor General to do an audit of these expenditures, and he has agreed to do so. In addition, at my

request, the Old Port has agreed to put in place an independent third party member to oversee all expenditures going forward.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives were really interested in accountability, they would not be stuffing these boards with failed Tory candidates. They have the nerve to tell average Canadians that the cupboard is bare while creating the most audacious employment scheme for people who were deliberately rejected by the people of Canada. We have failed Tories at the Employment Insurance Board, the Parole Board, the Human Rights Tribunal, the port authorities and, of course, the cash-for-life senator. My God, it is like watching a proliferation of zombies in a Tory horror movie. Why are they using the same tired old pork-barrel, rum-bottle politics that Canadians rejected when they threw out the Liberals?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's comments really miss the mark there. It is nothing of that type. We have ensured that appointments made to serve the public are from among Canadians who are very distinguished and capable. That does not disqualify people who, of course, have a political affiliation.

That is certainly the case with the NDP. We can find a number of its former candidates employed in political jobs. For example, we could look at Alain Ackad, who ran for the NDP in Lac-Saint-Louis. He is now assisting the MP for Pierrefonds—Dollard in a political job. I am sure there are many more.

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if you want to see beautiful images from the four corners of the world, sign up for the Grands Explorateurs. A season ticket to attend six fascinating talks costs \$83.50.

That is quite a bit cheaper than the \$10,000 it cost to send the president of the Old Port of Montreal Corporation on a trip. What is more, the president, upon her return, submitted a report consisting mainly of slides. Clearly, a fish rots from the top down.

Conservative ministers have demonstrated that it is okay to live high off the hog at taxpayers' expense. It is not surprising that others are trying to take advantage.

When are the Conservatives going to restore a responsible, ethical culture?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all share the member's concern and partly his outrage, but at this point we have asked the Auditor General to do an audit and we appreciate that he has accepted to do that.

Furthermore, at my request, the Old Port has agreed to take on a third party independent company to sit in at the Old Port to review and sign off on all expenditures going forward.

* * *

*[Translation]***LABOUR RELATIONS**

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, impunity and hypocrisy are the Conservatives' trademark.

When it came time to protect the economy of the Montreal region, protect jobs and enforce the Air Canada Act, the Conservatives sat on their hands. They did nothing. Aveos employees were not entitled to the special treatment received by CP, Air Canada and Canada Post management.

Once again, the Conservatives have waded into a conflict involving a private company. Why this misplaced interventionism? The invisible hand of the Conservatives has once again got a stranglehold on workers and their rights.

Why are the Conservatives so bent on repeatedly sabotaging negotiations?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the member did not watch the media on the weekend because, if he had, he would have realized that both parties have been unable to conclude a deal in the case of CP Rail, and, even though we have offered them 120 days of extra mediation, they have rejected that offer as well.

There is not question that the economy is being affected, which is why our government has tabled legislation and why we will be debating it this evening.

* * *

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when will the Conservatives figure out that workers are the backbone of the economy. The Conservatives' back-to-work legislation also attacks workers' pensions. The CPP fund is at the heart of this dispute. The government is siding with a profitable company that has decided to go after employees' pensions just for more profit.

Employees play by the rules and pay for their own pensions. Why are the Conservatives always picking winners and losers and why are workers' pensions always under attack?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would actually read the legislation she would see that it does not predetermine any issue. In fact, by introducing this

legislation, we are acting on the side of the Canadian economy and the general Canadian public interest.

We are not the ones taking sides. I do not think the opposition can say the same thing.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's passion for secrecy is legendary. First it deceived Canadians with a so-called \$10 billion accounting error. Then it refused to release the statement of requirements. It then said that there was a contract and then said that there was no contract. Then, when MPs may wish to examine ministers and other witnesses about the F-35, it shuts down the committee.

When will the Conservative government commit to govern with transparency rather than stealth?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we have had a thorough study of the Auditor General's report. In fact, we have had the Auditor General come to committee on three separate occasions to discuss this chapter. We have had senior officials from the departments come to committee on two separate occasions. We have had the Parliamentary Budget Officer come to committee to discuss his calculations. We have had ministers also come before the committee of the whole for hours to answer all of the questions of the opposition.

It is time to get going and for the opposition to quit playing political games and get this report written.

* * *

*[Translation]***SEARCH AND RESCUE**

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after so many years, we have learned there will finally be a competition to replace the search and rescue aircraft. The reason for this is clear: the operational needs for this aircraft were referred to the National Research Council for review and modification in order to guarantee an open and transparent competition.

If the process is good enough for that kind of aircraft, then why not for the CF-18s? Will the operational needs for the aircraft to replace the CF-18s be referred to the National Research Council for review, and will there be an open and transparent competition?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, search and rescue is a critical aspect for Canadian society and our government recognizes this fact. Our plans include proceeding as expeditiously as possible on the project. We will continue responsible management of this file, including consultations with industry. We are exploring options that will result in the best outcomes for search and rescue and the best benefits for Canadian taxpayers.

*Oral Questions***STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the chair of the public accounts committee.

In April, I moved motions to call for witnesses and to summon documents as part of the committee's study on the F-35 fiasco. Despite my motions having been previously called and still up for debate, the chair chose not to allow them to proceed.

My question is about the agenda of the committee. Why has the chair not allowed my motions to be dealt with and will he commit that, before proceeding to other business, he will allow my motions to be properly debated and properly voted on?

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question.

First, notwithstanding the fact that he is referring to matters that were dealt with in an in camera meeting and he understands the rules around that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. David Christopherson: Let me answer the question.

The first part of the answer is that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Hamilton Centre has the floor.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I will try again.

The first part of the answer to his question is that his motion was out of order. The member does not want to accept that, but that is not my problem.

On the second issue, there is another point of order. I committed to undertake to review that and come back with a determination that will happen on Thursday, and that is exactly what will take place.

* * *

RCMP

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, week after week, there are more and more revelations about sexual harassment in the RCMP.

Despite the fact that federal ministers have a clear responsibility to show leadership to address this very real problem, successive governments have turned a blind eye. The current Minister of Public Safety is reluctant to even use the words “sexual harassment” when asked about this in the House.

So many Conservative crime bills but nothing concrete to address the epidemic of sexual harassment in our own national police force.

Unfortunately, Canadians are rapidly losing faith in the RCMP as the clock ticks.

What is the minister's plan?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I have indicated in this House a number of times that I am extremely concerned about the troubling reports of sexual harassment in the RCMP.

There are a number of measures that the RCMP are taking, the commissioner specifically. I am very supportive of the initiatives that the new commissioner is taking.

In addition, we will be looking at the legislation that deals with issues of discipline. This is an issue that needs to be addressed through legislation. I hope, for once, I can count on that member's support when it comes to that type of legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not a new problem, and there have already been countless promises made. It is now time to act rather than wait for there to be more victims.

A high-ranking RCMP officer in Alberta was found guilty of repeated acts of sexual harassment. What was the outcome? He lost a few days' pay and was transferred. That is not a solution.

When are the Conservatives going to get tough on crime when it comes to sexual harassment?

● (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is committed to giving the RCMP the tools it needs to keep Canadians safe and to ensure there is appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms in place. We agree that changes are necessary to deal with what Commissioner Paulson called “dark hearted behaviour” displayed by a small minority of RCMP officers.

We will be bringing forward legislation in respect to discipline in the RCMP and I hope the member will support these important initiatives.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from one failure to investigate to another.

It is another day into the investigation into likely the single most expensive military procurement in Canadian history. What is new? It is a secret. The Conservatives say that they have nothing to hide. They say that there is not a cover-up, but if it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and even swims like a duck, what does the minister think it is?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have had a thorough study of the Auditor General's report. We have had ministers and senior officials from the departments come to committee of the whole and answer all of the opposition's questions. As a matter of fact, there were over 107 questions.

We accept the Auditor General's recommendations and we look forward to the committee's report.

Oral Questions

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have not heard the Minister of National Defence say why he refused to follow policy on life cycle costing. We have not heard the associate minister say why, for months, he misled Canadians in this House. We have not heard the Minister of Public Works say why her department signed off on sole sourcing the F-35. Instead, they are ducking public scrutiny.

Why will they not let the committee do its job out in the open and get the answers Canadians deserve?

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, ministers did come before committee of the whole and answered 107 questions, all of the questions the opposition requested them to answer.

In response to concerns raised by the Auditor General, we have undertaken a seven point plan to guide the replacement of Canada's aging CF-18s, led by a next generation fighter secretariat. We will ensure that Canadians have reliable and transparent costing that fits within our budget before signing any contracts to purchase a fighter aircraft.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Canada's horror at this weekend's attacks in the Syrian town of Houla in which nearly three dozen children under the age of 10 were viciously killed. Media reports today suggest that these killings were executions.

Despite repeated calls for peace, Assad's reprehensible campaign of savage violence continues unabated.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please tell the House the most recent actions taken by the Canadian government in response to the violence in Syria?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe all Canadians were absolutely horrified with the events that took place in Syria this past weekend. Targeting civilians, especially executing children, is absolutely intolerable and inexcusable.

Today, Canada, joined by many of its closest allies, has expelled Syrian diplomats from Canada. We are giving a very clear message to the Assad regime that his representatives are no longer welcome in our capital. We will continue to work very hard through the United Nations, the Arab League and our allies to bring much pressure to bear.

Tomorrow we are calling on the Security Council to bring in tough economic sanctions against the Assad regime and join what Canada has already been doing for many months.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sweeping cuts to fisheries will have a serious impact on the health of our waters, our fisheries and our coastal communities.

In a rare showing of non-partisanship, four former fisheries ministers have come together to criticize Conservative changes to the Fisheries Act. Tom Siddon, fisheries minister under Brian Mulroney, called the changes "devious and scary" and accused the Conservatives of gutting the Fisheries Act.

When will the fisheries minister recognize that this is a reckless road he is going down and stand up and defend coastal communities?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, we are focusing our fish and fish habitat protection rules on Canada's fisheries, not on farmers' fields.

The opposition likes to ignore the many massive improvements we are making to the act, such as identifying ecological sensitive areas, making the Fisheries Act conditions enforceable and allowing higher maximum penalties, as well as allowing regulations around invasive species. We made a \$17.5 million announcement just yesterday on invasive species to fight Asian carp.

● (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Conservatives are doing is endangering the very survival of the fishing industry and the economy of all coastal communities. That is why about 100 businessmen, academics and experts have signed a letter condemning the cuts.

By eliminating scientist and researcher positions, they are destroying our capacity to understand how fish habitats function.

Why are they attacking communities that make a living from fishing? Why are they abandoning sustainable management of the resource?

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has made and continues to make massive investments in science. We have invested \$30 million to refit laboratories and science vessels, millions of dollars to complete ocean mapping for Canada's UNCLOS submission and \$10 million to support emerging commercial fishing in the Arctic. Additionally, in Canada's 2012 budget there is another \$30 million to support fishery science.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to make matters worse, the Conservatives are eliminating the Centre for Offshore Oil, Gas and Energy Research, so last week, the Conservatives put one million hectares of our Arctic waters up for sale for oil and gas exploration, and this week, they are giving pink slips to the people who give us expert advice on how to deal with oil spills.

Is the minister planning to base something as important as Canada's energy policy on a whim or a hunch, or is he happy just to do whatever his oil lobbyist friends suggest?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we announced over \$20 million for the Beaufort regional environmental assessment process. That process is now ongoing to set benchmarks for future activities that may occur in the north, in the Arctic. Yes, indeed, we put out some exploration licences. There was take-up. This is good for the north; this is good for economic activity; this is part of our jobs and economic prosperity agenda.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' irresponsible cuts go even further than that. They are also scuttling Environment Canada's group for monitoring smokestacks and thereby eliminating our ability to measure industrial emissions. This interferes with our efforts to control pollution and, in addition, jeopardizes the health of the entire population of Canada.

Does the minister understand that slashing the monitoring of polluting emissions does not reduce atmospheric emissions?

Why is the minister taking an axe to the important scientific work done by his department and closing his eyes to industrial pollution?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, but it misrepresents and exaggerates what she is talking about.

Information that is relevant to our government's development of industrial smoke stack emissions regulation is available through a variety of sources, including the provinces and industry itself. Environment Canada will continue to work with other jurisdictions and with other expert bodies to ensure high standards to protect human health and the environment.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's ideological approach to budget cuts harms Canadians. A program that helps low-income Canadians access the Internet at libraries is gone; inspectors who ensure our food is safe to eat, gone; scientists who protect our oceans and environment, gone; the Coast Guard station in Kitsilano and search and rescue centres in St. John's and Quebec City, all gone.

Why is the government intent on making budget cuts that defy common sense and endanger lives?

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 we have made some moderate decisions that are designed to get the budget back into balance in the medium term. This is part of our long-term jobs and growth strategy that the Minister of Finance ably put forward in budget 2012. That is what we are focused on. We are focused on jobs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast; we are focused on economic growth that can be shared by all Canadians; and we will continue to focus on that because that is the mandate the Canadian people gave to us.

• (1455)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for some reason, the government is reluctant to fix a glaring problem with registered disability savings plans. To qualify for such a plan, people have to be seriously disabled right now, but those suffering a debilitating disease like MS, for example, which will result in serious disability at some future point but not right now, cannot get a registered disability savings plan. In other words, they cannot save now while they are still able to do so.

For the third time, why will the government not fix this obvious problem?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the registered disability savings plan was brought in by the government several years ago. I am interested in the member opposite's question. It is unfortunate that he voted against the plan when we brought it before the House of Commons.

There are some provisions in the budget this year, and I hope that the hon. member will look at the budget bill that is before the House now that addresses some of the revisions that the consultation we had in the past year indicated ought to be made to the registered disability savings plan. I hope the member will read it and then vote for the amendments.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities delivered a groundbreaking report today showing the Conservative government takes a lot more tax dollars out of municipalities, cities and towns than it puts in.

To paraphrase a former city mayor from Toronto, "Where is the money? Show us our money". Municipalities have difficulty fixing their crumbling bridges and have problems dealing with policing costs and building affordable housing.

Will the Conservative government replace the build Canada fund by the fall of 2014 so that municipalities can deal with—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never in the history of this country has a government invested as much as this government to support municipalities throughout the country.

We implemented the rebate of the excise tax on gasoline. Not only have we continued to rebate it, but we have now incorporated this in legislation.

[English]

The Speaker: Order. There is far too much cross dialogue going on. The hon. Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has the floor.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, municipalities in Canada do not have a more committed partner than our Conservative government, with \$33 billion through the building Canada fund. This fund will expire in 2014. That is why the new plan we are working on will be ready for 2014.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of talk but little comfort to Canadians who are stuck in traffic gridlocks and who have to boil water before they drink it. These are direct results of Conservative government neglect of cities and communities. To make matters worse, the green infrastructure fund has been cut.

The municipalities need to know by the fall of next year whether there will be a permanent program. They need to know whether the gas tax will be indexed so that it will be protected from the ravages of inflation.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are working with all our partners throughout the country. This afternoon, right after, we will continue to have discussions with provincial ministers about the new infrastructure plan.

We are already at work to deliver. What is very difficult to understand is that the NDP voted against everything we set up for municipalities. I will be with them at the FCM. I will remind them what the party voted against.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the men and women of the Canadian Forces are amongst the best soldiers in the world. Their service to our great nation is very much appreciated.

For some in uniform, the service and sacrifices they make will stay with them for the rest of their lives in a form of physical or mental disability.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre has the floor. We will have a little order.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the minister please update this House on the status of long-term disability pension payments to injured veterans?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre for his work on this file and his long service in the Canadian Forces himself.

This morning I had the opportunity to speak with Dennis Manuge, who was part of the class action. I informed him of our government's decision not to appeal the recent ruling regarding the long-term disability insurance plan.

We sought the court's clarification. We agreed with the decision. We will act expeditiously to ensure that these benefits are provided to our veterans and our current members who need it as soon as possible. We will extend this approach, as well, to the earnings loss benefit program, as well as two other relevant programs in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We care for our veterans. This is the right thing to do.

* * *

● (1500)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 23, RCMP Commissioner Paulson begged the status of women committee to update the 25-year-old disciplinary rule that ties his hands and allows officers convicted of sexual harassment to go free. Unfortunately, government committee members offered lip service and deaf ears, as my motion to address the problem did not pass. This inaction has now forced the commissioner to appeal directly to Canadian people.

Victims are tired of being swept under the rug and want to know when the so-called minister of law and order is finally going to do his job, stop talking and start doing, and take some serious action on behalf of the thousands of victims out there in Canada.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are amazing comments coming from a member who sat in a caucus that shut down the depot in Regina and stopped the training of RCMP officers.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: We absolutely did not.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Public Safety has the floor.

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to my colleagues in the NDP, I have been working diligently with the commissioner—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Public Safety has the floor.

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, Troop 4, 1998, was the last troop before the Liberals shut down the depot, and they know it.

I have indicated we have worked with the commissioner—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Public Safety has the floor.

Hon. Vic Toews: Notwithstanding the comments by the member for Wascana, Mr. Speaker, we will work with the RCMP. We will not shut it down. We will ensure that the Canadian people are protected.

* * *

POVERTY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today UNICEF released a report on rates of child poverty that ranks Canada in the bottom third of industrialized countries. The report pulls no punches and says that the child poverty rate shows up in stunted individual potential, higher social costs and dimmed economic prosperity for all.

Will the government live up to its responsibilities under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and act now to end child and family poverty?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has done exactly that. In fact, the percentage of children in poverty is half under our government of what it was under the Liberals. Why is that? It is because we have done a lot of things that the NDP voted against, such as enhancing the national child benefit and the child tax benefit. This year we are investing \$19 billion in support of children. Those members are voting against it. We introduced the universal child care benefit that has taken 55,000 children out of the low income bracket. Those members voted against that. We have improved that for single families. They are voting against it too.

We are there. We are helping children get out of poverty. Too bad the NDP would not join us in that effort.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my top priority and that of our government is creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canadians.

The over 751,000 net new jobs created since July 2009 are positive signs that our pro-trade plan is on the right track for London workers and Canadian workers. Economic action plan 2012 announced a commitment to refresh the global commerce strategy.

Would the Minister of International Trade share with the House how our government is moving forward with what is the most comprehensive trade expansion plan in Canada's history?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today on International Trade Day our government is launching the next phase of our pro-trade plan for jobs, growth and economic prosperity.

We have announced the start of formal consultations towards an updated global commerce strategy and also the appointment of an eminent panel of Canadian industry and business leaders who will provide advice on the next phase of the plan. This will demonstrate once again that Canadians can compete in the global marketplace against the best in the world and win.

I do want to thank the member for London West for his great work on the trade committee and for the great question.

* * *

● (1505)

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the government knows, the people of northwestern Ontario are a strong and united people, but we are not immune from the forces of nature. A state of emergency has been declared in Thunder Bay and the surrounding areas due to flooding. When the damage to public infrastructure is fully assessed, it will be in the tens of millions of dollars.

When the request for financial assistance comes from the municipalities and the province, is the Minister of Public Safety prepared to help the people of Thunder Bay and the surrounding areas rebuild after this unfortunate event?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to those affected by the flooding. Management of these situations rests primarily with the Province of Ontario, but there is room for federal involvement through the provisions of the disaster financial assistance agreement.

I have also discussed this matter with the member for Kenora to ensure that the voices of northern Ontarians are being heard along with that member. The Government of Canada stands ready to assist should we be requested to do so.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2010 the Conservatives legalized the looting of \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund. By 2016, another \$16 billion will have been taken away from employers and employees. The government is now proposing a reform to reduce benefits for workers who lose their jobs. Let us be honest: the employment insurance program has become a cash cow for the government.

Since the government is treating employment insurance as no more than a tax on working, why does it not transfer responsibility for it to Quebec, which former chief actuary Michel Bédard says would be better able to protect its workers, at a lower cost?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything he has just said is absolutely false. The Liberals are the ones who looted the employment insurance fund, and we are the ones who have introduced a new system to make sure there is a balance between premiums paid and spending. Unfortunately, the Bloc voted against that effort to control spending and help the unemployed at the same time.

S. O. 57

[*English*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a parliamentary delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina, led by the Honourable Milorad Zivkovic, Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Ken Hughes, Minister of Energy for Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question about the changes to the long-term disability policy, I wanted to thank all members of the House for their support, particularly the Minister of Veterans Affairs for his hard work on this file.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those who were chanting “Peter” on this side were speaking of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore, although we do appreciate the minister's decision not to appeal the decision and we support it wholeheartedly.

During question period, the member for Toronto Centre was kind enough to read a quotation by Premier Dunderdale, the premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. Unfortunately, he called her “he” in his quotation. I would like to give him an opportunity to correct the record. Premier Dunderdale is actually a women. He may want to correct it in the blues, but perhaps he would want to correct it in the House as well.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition House leader already tweeted on this subject, which is a thoroughly nice thing of him to do.

I also appreciate the point from the member for St. John's East. I know Premier Dunderdale extremely well. We had a wonderful meeting not too long ago. In fact, we spent the regatta together on August 1. If I inadvertently referred to the premier as “he” when I should have referred to her as “she”, of course I apologize.

• (1510)

The Speaker: Order, please. I am not sure if any of those are actual points of orders, but I am sure the House appreciates the clarifications.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CONTINUATION AND RESUMPTION OF RAIL SERVICE OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the consideration of Government Business No. 12, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. As has been done in the past, members should try to keep questions or comments to about a minute and the responses to a similar length of time.

Once again, we will try to give preference to members of the opposition, although government members will be recognized in the rotation.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time today we are debating an attack on democracy.

[*English*]

There has been a shutdown of the investigation into the F-35 hearings, as well as the refugee abuse bill earlier this morning. It is the 23rd time since being elected to a majority that the government has used this abusive tactic in Parliament, a tactic that it used to say was contemptuous of Parliament and against the democratic values of the House.

[*Translation*]

The government has to justify using this brutal tool against democracy and against the interests of Canadians.

[*English*]

Because I suggest that the minister may not be moved by my own words, I will repeat the words of the Prime Minister when he believed in the powers and supremacy of this place to actually have debate. He stated:

We have closure today precisely because there is no deadline and there are no plans. Instead of having deadlines, plans and goals, we must insist on moving forward because the government is simply increasingly embarrassed by the state of the debate and it needs to move on.

No more than 10 hours after negotiations began, the minister and the government indicated clearly that they would be introducing back-to-work legislation thereby siding with one side of the table.

I cannot understand how the minister and the government do not realize that they poisoned the well of negotiations between employers and employees and have now poisoned the well of the democratic values of this place to have a fair and free debate by invoking closure and shutting down debate in the House for the 23rd time in just over a year.

S. O. 57

Where are the principles that Conservative members used to have for the supremacy of Parliament?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I do not think the hon. member meant to say that we had introduced the motion 10 hours after negotiations began. I think he meant 10 hours after the work stoppage began. Negotiations have been ongoing in this matter for many months, with many hours of help from Labour Canada. That is the point.

During all of this time the parties have not been able to conclude an agreement. They have not been able to even agree to a process that they can voluntarily submit to. Now we have a strike that affects the national economy and we need to act because a prolonged strike has a great effect on the prosperity of our country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that a Conservative majority government does not support democracy within this chamber. We can talk about time allocation records dealing with issues like the Canadian Wheat Board, the pooled pension, copyright bill, gun registry, financial system reviews act, back-to-work legislation for CP Rail today, Canada Post in the past and Air Canada not once but twice. The minister in particular has introduced more time allocations and back-to-work legislation than any minister prior to her.

To what degree does the minister believe that she has any credibility whatsoever when it comes to the issue of having a fair bargaining process? If we talk to the workers, whether of CP, Air Canada or Canada Post, there is great disappointment that the Conservative government does not believe in the free bargaining process.

• (1515)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, that is the opinion of the member and it is completely incorrect. We truly believe in free collective bargaining. It is a very important part of the Canada Labour Code. That is why we put so much work and effort into trying to help the parties before they actually get to an impasse. Indeed, labour officials, my deputy minister and I, in my role as Minister of Labour, worked many hours with the parties to try to get them to their own deal or to get them to a process. Instead, we have a work stoppage, which is affecting the national economy and the Canadian public interest.

I understand the member has talked to workers. We as well have a greater audience and a greater universe we must talk to and consider. That is the Canadian public in general and it is being affected as well, in industries and in businesses, with possibilities of lay-offs coming in industries that are not CP Rail. That is why it is important to move it forward quickly today.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems strange for me hear the words “we believe in free collective bargaining” from the minister. If the Conservatives believed in free collective bargaining, they would allow that bargaining process to play out. Even before the workers had been on strike for more than a few days, the minister announced that there would be an intervention as soon as the House opened. That took away any incentive from the employer to bargain.

My question for the minister is very simple. Did the minister meet with the employer and tell it that its demands to take away

employees' pensions and take more money out of their pocket was contrary to the fact that it made millions and millions of dollars in profits last year?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, this is where the opposition does not understand the role of government. The role of government is to be the third party to help the parties to a deal. We are not on one side of the deal or on the other side of the deal. I do not give explanations of management or labour to the other side. I am there to help them talk to each other. When they do not talk to each other and we end up with a strike that affects the national economy or the greater public interests, that when we indicated, which we did last Wednesday, that there would not be a prolonged strike and that we would move in this fashion.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having had an opportunity to read the legislation, it is completely different than past back-to-work legislation that we have seen in this chamber. We have seen it far more prescriptive and almost offensive.

I would appreciate if the minister would explain the shift in the approach of the back-to-work legislation, where this one certainly would not put the same parameters around as did the past two pieces of back-to-work legislation. It allows allow more flexibility with the arbitrator.

Could she explain the rationale as to why she followed this path at this time?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, this legislation clearly would not predetermine any issue. That is still in dispute between the parties, to be a fair and balanced approach in interest-based arbitration. I will also point out that it is very similar, if not identical, to the legislation that was tabled in the House in 2009 with respect to CN Rail. It very much is, and was, the approach that we take with respect to the private companies associated with the railways.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Minister of Labour say that the government was not on either side of the negotiations, but that it acted as a third party that intervened when the talks broke off or, it seems, when they were interrupted. It is funny, but this afternoon I really feel like I completely understand the position of the Canadian Pacific workers because in this very House, where there are two parties that should be able to discuss this new bill, the government tells us point-blank after just a few minutes that it will impose closure on us, the hon. members of this House, and that we will have a limited time to discuss an approach as significant as the one the government has now used repeatedly. The same thing happened with Air Canada and with Canada Post.

Is this how the government intends to conduct negotiations in Canada's public and private sectors from now on?

S. O. 57

• (1520)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for other matters with respect to time allocation, but I can speak to this specific case.

In this case, we are on day seven of a work stoppage, a strike. We know from past precedents, from 60 years of history, that if the work stoppage is prolonged, rail strikes have dire and serious effects on the national economy.

We have given space at the table for the two parties to negotiate with the help of our labour officials, mediators and ourselves within the ministry. Unfortunately, they have not come to a deal within that timeframe.

We are looking at a situation in which companies are reporting to ministers of transport, agriculture, industry and natural resources that it is getting very tight for people who rely upon CP Rail for the transit of their goods and receipt of their materials. For the greater good of the economy, we feel that when the negotiations have stopped and the work stoppage continues, we really do need to make sure that CP Rail gets working on Thursday.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my area we have a commuter rail system that is very important to commuters getting to and from work. I know the minister was involved early on in the conversation to resolve the commuter rail issue. Could she explain what she did there, and what the minister's role was? Overall, what is the role of the Minister of Labour in any dispute that has come to her attention?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the Canada Labour Code, the Minister of Labour actually has no distinct powers to do anything about a work stoppage but to come to Parliament and ask for back-to-work legislation or to work with the parties to get a deal or find a process.

In the case of the commuter portion of CP Rail, in the past, CP Rail and the Teamsters have not made an agreement to provide commuter rail services. What we saw in 1995 was the shutting down of commuter rail services in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto. At the time, 75,000 Canadians could not get to work or get home from work as a result.

It was very important for us, as one of the first steps when the negotiations were coming to a close and the cooling-off period ended, to make sure that Canadians were provided with commuter services, and both parties did agree to it finally at the end.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this type of back-to-work legislation is far from unprecedented. Unfortunately, this has become common practice.

Can the minister tell us why she is refusing to guarantee collective bargaining and why she has introduced yet another bill to erode workers' rights?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, this back-to-work legislation today is a fair and balanced approach. It does not predetermine any issue and it provides the parties with a resolution to their matter, but from our perspective it also provides something equally important: it

provides resumption of the service. In this way the national economy can continue to prosper and grow and the Canadian public's interests are upheld.

Collective bargaining is enshrined within the Canada Labour Code. We do all that we can in Labour Canada to support it, but there is a point in time when the greater balancing has to happen. As government, it is our obligation to ensure that we act on behalf of the entire nation and the economy on which we rely.

[Translation]

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister, who has worked extremely hard on this file, not just this week. For several months, she has helped and encouraged the two parties to negotiate.

I am personally concerned about the economic recovery here in Canada. We are all aware that this strike is hurting the economic recovery.

For the sake of everyone in the House and all the Canadians watching us today, I would ask the minister to clearly explain the impact of this conflict on the Canadian economy. What will the impact be if we do not fix this problem?

• (1525)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question specifically focusing on the economic aspect.

A report in 2009 out of the Rotman School of Management indicated that just in terms of the four bulk carrier areas of oil, oilseeds and grains, pulp and paper products, and coal, a cessation of rail service that would cause these products not to move would entail a weekly cost to the economy of \$540 million. That is the cost associated with just those four areas.

Car parts come in through the port of Vancouver each and every day. They are needed for the assembly plants in southwestern Ontario. That is extremely important to our economy. The effect in 1995 is untold, but economists have put it very close to the \$3 billion to \$5 billion range.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Teamsters Union for bargaining in good faith. We can say they were bargaining in good faith because they did not disrupt commuter transportation.

Unfortunately, the same thing cannot be said about CP Rail management. Why would they bargain in good faith when they know that the Minister of Labour is going to interfere with workers and bargaining rights?

This is my question for the minister. Why does she not believe in collective bargaining?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe in free collective bargaining. The bulk of my work as Minister of Labour is to support it and to help provide parties with the space to do that.

That said, I have to commend both the Teamsters, who were first to offer to provide the commuter services—which was a very great gesture—and CP Rail, which at the end of the day also agreed to provide the commuter services.

The parties did work diligently at the table and attempted to find a way, but they were unable to or did not want to. As a result, we are here today to introduce and debate back-to-work legislation so that the trains can commence on Thursday.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have become accustomed to this government's gag orders and strong-arm tactics. Once again, as always, the Minister of Labour wants to use another strong-arm tactic. Here is my question. How far will they go in acting this way?

During the Canada Post negotiations, the government's proposals were well below the salary levels discussed. Tomorrow, by passing the legislation, the minister is going to introduce her own right to strike or lock out.

What is this country coming to? Where is our democracy? Where are the workers' rights?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, in 60 years of parliamentary precedent, rail strikes have occurred ten times, and ten times the government of the day either asked and ordered the workers to go back to work or the companies to end the lockout, the reason being that we balance the workers' right to strike. We recognize it in the Canada Labour Code and there are rules and regulations around it, but we need to balance that against the greater issues of the national economy and the Canadian public interest.

That was measured in 1995. It was measured in 2007. It was measured in 2009, and prior to that in the 1960s and 1970s. It is the same set of circumstances that cause us to come to the conclusion that back-to-work legislation needs to be introduced. The effect on the national economy and the effect on the Canadian public interest is so great from a work stoppage that we have to balance it against the rights of the workers to strike. That is why we are announcing back-to-work legislation.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the minister mention a 60-year history, and she rhymed off some numbers. Can the minister can tell us when it was, during the last 60 years, that we passed back-to-work legislation three times consecutively in one year?

In one year we have had postal workers, Air Canada and now Teamsters. I am wondering if the minister could answer that question. I am sure she does not have those figures.

• (1530)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, the year was 1995 and the government was Liberal.

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the minister speak about meeting with the parties to try to facilitate a collective agreement. It was the Minister of Labour who assisted in the agreement between the parties to maintain commuter rail service during the strike.

S. O. 57

Could the minister further explain the role that she, as the Minister of Labour, plays in these labour relations?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, in an ideal world everything would go as planned, as with what happened with respect to the BCMEA and the longshore in Vancouver. What happened in that case was that the parties remained at the table and were diligent in negotiating. It took two years for us to get to the point of a deal, but they did their own deal, with the help of Labour Canada and myself. They ended up with a fantastic deal. It was good for management and good for employees, and there was a great renewed sense of importance for the Asia-Pacific gateway. That is a true measure of success.

Ending a process by having to introduce and pass back-to-work legislation is not a measure of success. What it indicates is that the parties could not find a deal at the table, and because the strike would have an effect on the national economy, the government needs to step in. That is not what is supposed to happen. We much prefer to be on the side of facilitating the parties in collective bargaining and making sure that they find their own way to a deal or, if they cannot, to a process.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to know from the minister why back-to-work legislation is being imposed for the third time on a group of employees who have fought for recognition of their right of association and their bargaining rights.

This is the third major union, the third major employer that they have disagreed with. This is even a repudiation of management's negotiators and shows a lack of confidence. They are taking away all the tools that both management and union sides use when bargaining without legal interference.

What kind of labour climate does she think this will create for these three major businesses, these three major entrepreneurs? What will happen? Employees will wind up on unemployment and will be forced to work for 70% of their salary.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I too worry about the after-effects of a government imposing a process for the parties to find their own deal, because history will tell us that it does not help the employees and it does not help management. That is why it is their problem and their responsibility to get a deal at the table. However, if they cannot get a deal at the table, especially with respect to rail, there cannot be a prolonged work stoppage that affects the national economy.

When I was at the table with the parties during the negotiations, we made it very clear that they knew the history of this sector. As a result, we indicated to them that if they were having difficult discussions on very important topics such as pensions, they needed to find a process of their own to go forward. We provided that to them on Sunday, prior to any kind of back-to-work legislation, and both of them rejected it outright.

S. O. 57

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not know what the Conservatives will be doing during the summer break because they have unfortunately gotten us used to their habit of using the guillotine in Parliament every week, for virtually anything, on every bill. We are in that situation once again.

My question is in a way further to that of my colleague from Compton—Stanstead. I would like to ask the minister whether she is aware that her government's actions have given the employer the opportunity to simply sit back and wait for special legislation to be imposed on workers. Unfortunately, she has shown with Canada Post and Air Canada that this is what employers under federal jurisdiction now have to do: stop bargaining and simply wait for the sword of Damocles.

That sword is not slow in coming. The minister announced in advance that there would be special legislation, which will no doubt be to the workers' disadvantage. So that is what is coming. That also somewhat answers the question by my colleague from Compton—Stanstead, who asked what was coming. What is coming is that, thanks to the Conservative government, there will be no more bargaining. The Conservatives have just stripped the workers of the right to fair and equitable bargaining. This is a scandal.

• (1535)

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I would invite the member to look at the legislation. The legislation that we are proposing and will be debating this evening does not predetermine any issue that is in dispute with the parties. In fact, we have put in place a neutral process with an arbitrator who can listen to both sides and see what is still in dispute. If they still cannot come to an agreement themselves within those 90 days, the arbitrator will have the power to take part in or come up with his or her own way of establishing a collective agreement.

What we are saying is that the rail strike cannot continue. It is having an effect on the national economy and it will get worse as each day goes by. We need to act this evening in order to ensure that Canadian Pacific and the teamsters can collectively go back to work on Thursday.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, the word bargaining necessarily involves big bucks. As we know, in a negotiation, the two parties sit down on either side of the table and calculate very accurately what they have to lose before agreeing on a settlement that can be transformed into a win-win situation.

Is the minister aware that, by announcing days ahead of time that there will be special legislation, she is changing the calculations that the employer is doing at the bargaining table and that, consequently, if it concludes that it would be better to wait for special legislation than to really bargain, genuine bargaining as it should be done has just been completely short-circuited?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, from the government's perspective, we looked at the effect of a strike and work stoppage. We also calculate how its effect on the economy can be balanced

against the right of workers to strike. Indeed, history has shown that when it gets to seven to nine days of a rail strike, it has a grossly disproportionate effect on the entire economy. We made it clear to the parties that history shows that they will probably be looking at a process forced upon them by the government if they do not agree.

It was equally important to let businesses know that the government was aware of what was happening at the table and, indeed, the government would take out of the way procedural hurdles that would have to be undertaken prior to being able to introduce back-to-work legislation. All of those things were done because we want to protect the national economy and we stand on the side of Canadian public interest.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.): Madam Speaker, why is it that when required legislation is put forward, like Senate reform that was promised, it takes ages and ages and weeks and years but when something like the HST or this legislation needs to be debated, it can be rammed through in hours? There are a number of abuses to democracy that we are seeing in the House these days. It could take hours to list them all.

Why does the Conservative Party and the minister favour U.S.-controlled and owned large corporations over the rights of workers across Canada?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, if the member would like to look at the actual legislation, he will see that we have put together legislation that does not predetermine any issue, does not favour either side and, indeed, one could say that interest-based arbitration tends to favour the status quo.

In the back-to-work legislation that we have introduced, each party will have an opportunity to present its case and the arbitrator will have the ability to combine the two to create a collective agreement or, indeed, help the parties reach their own collective agreement themselves.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question is for the minister.

What kind of impact will imposing a collective agreement have? In this case, there is the issue of the pension fund, which the company wants to reduce by 40%. That is a big part of the collective agreement, and reducing it will penalize the workers.

Do the Conservatives have a hidden agenda to set a precedent in Canada for reducing private sector pension funds in the future?

• (1540)

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the issue of pensions was a very divisive issue at the bargaining table. I guess the best way to put it is that they could not find their way forward as a result of it, which is why we have the strike that we have today.

We believe that the process proposed in the back-to-work legislation is fair, neutral and allows both of the parties to put their issues on the table before an arbitrator. The arbitrator does not have to choose one over the other. He or she can put both of them together or come up with a collective agreement based upon what the parties submitted. It is the best way to approach this matter, especially when we are dealing with issues that are as important as people's pensions.

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*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1620)

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

(*Division No. 229*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde

Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oda
Opitz
Payne
Poilievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Richardson
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 157

S. O. 57

Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoeppner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Oliver
Paradis
Penashue
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Toews
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brison
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Coderre
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère

Government Orders

Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogné
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Savoie	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turler
Valeriotte — 135	

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 12

The House resumed from May 28 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When the House last took up business on this motion, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour had six minutes remaining for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the 23rd time since the last election, the government has invoked closure. Is there not a developing pathology within the Conservative ranks, and a certain attraction and addiction, to shutting down debate in Canada's Parliament to achieve their very narrow interests, often interests that were never talked about in the last campaign? A mandate that the Conservatives never achieved seems to be consistently married to their use of these most brutal measures, measures that Conservatives in previous incarnations used to abhor, used to say that these were wrong for Canada's Parliament and Canada's democracy and went directly against the interests of the Canadian people.

For my friend across the way, I ask why something he despised in opposition the Conservatives have come to love so much in government.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his comment, but he can see by the skirt that I am wearing that I am not "he". However, I will take that under advisement for the next time I get up.

I will say that our first priority here is the Canadian economy. We want to make sure that Canadians have an opportunity to be working every day.

For example, in my riding of Simcoe—Grey, right now, because of this rail stoppage, Honda is unable to ship its cars. It is unable to receive parts or actually move its product. This is having a huge impact on the local economy in my riding let alone on the economy across the country.

We know that in 2010, \$5 billion worth of potash was moved by CP Rail and \$11.1 billion in grain was moved. These are substantive components of our Canadian economy. We want to make sure that Canadians can work. We want to make sure that we are maintaining jobs and growing the economy.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the parliamentary secretary explain the last two pieces of back-to-work legislation? They were certainly prescriptive in outlining what the arbitrator could not do. However, the government has taken a departure on this particular piece of back-to-work legislation. I am wondering what the government's rationale is on this occasion.

● (1625)

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, in this legislation we have interest-based arbitration. The intention behind that is to allow both parties to have free negotiations with the arbitrator and come to a common ground. They have been unable to do that so far. The government is intervening in order to make sure that we can support the economy and move forward.

We are moving forward because they were unable to come to that agreement together. We are acting in the interest of the Canadian public. We are moving forward by this back-to-work legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the government, it is doing all of this because of the economy. That is its priority. Do Canadians simply not exist? Many Canadians have worked hard and negotiated collective agreements to get pension funds.

Now that the government is legislating people back to work and employers are cutting workers' pension funds, what does the government have to say to workers, who are also Canadians?

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, the Minister of Labour has been listening, and not just listening to the big union bosses who I know the opposition members like to listen to, but listening to Canadians and what they want and need, which is a growing economy and their jobs protected.

Government Orders

We know there is a ripple effect associated with the stoppage at CP Rail. We know that there is a huge impact on the global economy with respect to this issue. I ask the NDP to support this legislation and let us get CP Rail working again so that those people working in my riding at Honda can go to work.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague referred to a pathology that is emerging here. We note today and before we went on break the effort at the public accounts committee to shut down debate on the F-35 investigation. This seems to be repeating itself over and over again in the government's conduct. Could the parliamentary secretary explain the source of this pathology to us?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Madam Speaker, as a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, I would not say that this is a pathology. This is actually the answer, the diagnosis and treatment to a problem that exists.

Let us be very clear, the treatment here is making sure that the rails are running. We are doing that by taking action on behalf of the Canadian public and in the public interest.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Madam Speaker, today, like many people in this room, I have a certain sense of déjà vu because it was almost exactly one year ago today that our former leader, Jack Layton, stood in this House under very similar circumstances. He stood to oppose this government's special legislation to force locked-out Canada Post workers—and it is important to note that they were locked out—back to work. It is important to note that they were locked out because it is this government that locked them out in the first place.

There is a word for this in the jargon of collective bargaining and labour law. It is a term that is part of everyday language but that has a specific meaning in matters pertaining to labour relations, and that is “bad faith”.

There has rarely been such a blatant example of bad faith on the part of a government than in this case. Let us not forget what happened. The government took a look at the Canada Post workers who were doing their jobs and imposed a lockout on them to prevent them from working. Then the Conservatives cried, “Oh, my goodness; the postal workers have stopped working. What are we going to do? We have to legislate them back to work.”

And that is how this exercise came about, one that illustrates the Conservatives' strong tendency, since taking office, to violate collective rights, attack workers and use any means at the disposal of their majority to send a clear signal to employers. The signal is that it is open season on workers' rights. Employers should not let themselves be tricked. Collective agreements, the Supreme Court, the rights guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—all those exist for another day. The Conservatives are here to impose law and order and it is open season for employers. That is the message that the Conservatives are sending.

After Canada Post came Air Canada. They did not even need to draw their weapons this time because the reaction was so immediate. They were winning their bet. Today, it is CP Rail.

That was three pieces of back-to-work legislation from this government in this session of Parliament alone: three special bills passed in a mad rush in less than 12 months.

Let us now compare that to what has happened in recent years and we will understand the difference and the message that the Conservatives are trying to send. Only nine back-to-work bills were passed in all of the 1990s, and only six in all of the 1980s, when the Conservatives were mainly in power. We can see how disproportionate this is. The Conservatives are at three bills in 12 months. As my friend and colleague, the official opposition House leader, just said, the Conservatives have imposed gag orders and used a guillotine to cut off debate and prevent parliamentarians from speaking about subjects as important as the budget over 20 times. This demonstrates the Conservatives' strong tendency to muzzle, gag and silence the elected representatives of the people here in this House.

There is much more at stake here today than the CP Rail dispute. Yes, there was the Air Canada dispute. Yes, there was the Canada Post dispute. But what we are seeing here is a defining element of the Conservative approach to lower the standard of living for every single Canadian.

● (1630)

[*English*]

There has been example after example since the Conservatives came to power of lowering the standard of living of Canadians. This is the first generation where we have seen the middle class start to lose. Over the past 25 years the earnings of the top 20% in our society have increased, a tendency that we have observed throughout the history of the country, but for the other 80%, living conditions, wages, the middle class has actually seen that drop.

It is the first time in Canadian history we have observed that, and it is a heavy tendency. It is one that we keep observing. It is a series of actions by the government, and by today's attack on collective bargaining rights, on labour rights, on rights that are reserved and guaranteed by the charter, reserved and guaranteed and enforced by the courts, the Conservatives are again attacking workers and their rights in this country.

Some of the choices that the Conservatives have made over the years have resulted in the pressures that they now say they need to react to by cutting everything in the budget. For example, if we look at employment insurance, people are told to take a 30% pay cut, ship themselves a couple of hours out of town and take any job that presents itself, otherwise they will lose their right to collect the employment insurance that they paid into with their own money and their employers paid into.

Government Orders

Do members remember in 2009 when the Conservatives double closed the door that the Liberals had already closed, which had already gone all the way to the Supreme Court, when they emptied out \$50 billion from the employment insurance account? They turned that into general revenue of the government. A lot of people said that it was government money before and that it was government money now and asked what that changed. Here is what it changed. The \$50 billion in question was paid into the employment insurance account by every employee for a specific purpose: to take care of them during the cyclical ups and downs of the economy; and it was paid into by every employer. Whether employers were earning a good profit, breaking even or losing money, they still had to pay into it for every employee.

When the Liberals emptied out the EI account, they created a \$50 billion fiscal space. What became of that \$50 billion fiscal space? It was turned into tax reductions for the richest corporations. The Conservatives do not like it when we say “for the richest corporations”. They will argue that it is for all corporations. Let us look at the facts. A company that was breaking even or losing money certainly did not benefit from a tax reduction because it was not paying any.

In these tough economic times, especially for any export sector, including the fisheries, the forestry and manufacturing, a lot of them were losing money or barely breaking even. The money they had paid in was for a specific purpose: to provide insurance in case of unemployment. When the 2008 crisis hit, that cupboard was bare and it had been emptied because that money had been turned over to the wealthiest corporations, like the banks and the oil companies. That is the record of the Conservatives and the Liberals and that is why the NDP is standing up today and saying that it has to stop.

• (1635)

[*Translation*]

With their decisions, the Conservatives are disrupting the balance of the economy that we have built up since the Second World War. Countries such as Norway, like us, are resource-rich. However, they have learned to deal with the challenges this represents. We have not been as wise: we have engaged in the unbridled development of natural resources, without applying the basic principle of polluter pay. This is disrupting the balance of the economy that we have built up since the Second World War.

There was a time when Canadians from Langley to St. John's could count on a decent job with adequate wages to support their families. They could also count on a pension that let them retire with dignity and on an accessible employment insurance system. Not anymore.

At a conference attended by billionaires held in the Swiss Alps, our Prime Minister decided to do some grandstanding and show that he too would do some boasting and lecture the least fortunate. He would announce that even though they had worked all their lives in construction or had worked hard in a factory, he did not believe that they had worked hard enough and he would make them work two more years and would take \$12,000 out of their pockets because he believed that they were not productive enough.

At the same time, he eliminated those jobs and employment opportunities for the younger generation. This younger generation is

already paying the biggest environmental, economic and social debt in history. Today, university students in Canada borrow an average of \$30,000 to complete an undergraduate degree.

At what point are young couples who are already \$60,000 in debt when they start their careers supposed to buy a house? This is what happens when the government's economic ability to support post-secondary education is eliminated. The government creates the situation and decries it, just as it did in the Canada Post lockout. It creates the situation and says that it can no longer help because there is no more money. What did it do with the money? It gave the money to corporations that do not create jobs. The Royal Bank of Canada did not create any jobs last year.

Last year, federally chartered banks in Canada made \$30 billion in profit. They gave \$15 billion in bonuses to their executives. That is what they did with the money. They did not create jobs.

At least the NDP has a vision: if there is fiscal room available, we will direct it to companies that create jobs. That is what a government is supposed to do.

[*English*]

The government is trying to tell Canadians that we need to accept less, that we should accept lower wages and weaker pensions. They are trying to create for employers an unlimited pool of cheap labour. It is commonplace and it is almost a caricature but it was the Minister of Human Resources last week, in response to a question in a press conference, who specifically cited the creation of workers for McDonalds. It is not a hyperbole on the part of the opposition. That is what she actually said. One of the ministers responsible for finance said “Well, of course if a teacher is looking for a job in Newfoundland, we have jobs in the mines”. This is their philosophy. This is money that belongs to the workers. The Conservatives think it belongs to McDonalds and they are creating a system for employers and evacuating workers rights.

This special legislation forcing workers back on the job despite the collective bargaining process is just a fuller illustration of exactly what they are up to: lowering workers rights, lowering the ability of the middle-class to pay for itself and evacuating the capacity of the government to provide services. That is the agenda of the Conservatives.

It is important to note that the Conservatives are not just affecting any one union or any one group of people but all Canadians. That is the Conservative vision. Under their policies, we are becoming the first generation that will leave less to our children than what we inherited from our parents. The New Democrats will not let that happen.

Collective bargaining is guaranteed by the charter and by the Supreme Court of Canada. Collective bargaining benefits all Canadians with better wages, workplace safety, a 40-hour work week, a weekend where workers can actually be with their families and the list goes on. However, the Conservatives are determined to dismantle it. They are undermining this right and it is unprecedented in Canada.

Government Orders

For Air Canada, the government did not even wait for a strike to begin to bring in legislation. It did not bother to allow a negotiated settlement to happen. The labour minister says that she will intervene in any dispute she feels impacts the economy. The last time I checked, every working Canadian contributes to the economy, period. That basically means no more rights.

The minister is saying that no labour negotiation is safe from Conservative interference. The approach is unbalanced, it is heavy-handed, it is against the charter and it will be enforced but it will take time. Taking sides helps no one. It sends a terrible message that legislative settlement is the new labour relations norm in Canada. There is no incentive for the parties to negotiate in good faith if they know the government will step in. What possible incentive do employers have to bargain in good faith with their employees when they receive a clear signal from the government that it will bring in back-to-work legislation, as we saw with Canada Post and as we are seeing again? They can just fold their arms and wait until the employees are forced back to work. They do not care. Of course, the government does not care either but it is willing to do the bidding of any employer that asks. That is what we are here standing up against today.

The government is creating a slippery slope where no one will get a fair deal. Canadians relied on collective bargaining rights for decades. The government must respect the right of future generations to live with the same security past generations have had. What we are leaving our children is a defining issue of our times. As I mentioned, the middle-class is struggling like never before with income disparity levels not seen since the Great Depression. We are one of the richest countries in the world and yet we are one of the countries with the greatest disparity between the rich and the poor.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

It is worth noting that, in Canada, the gap between the wealthy in our society and the least fortunate is among the largest in the world and has only gotten wider since the Conservatives took office. We have not seen this since the depression in the 1920s. The security Canadians once felt is starting to vanish. This is not by chance; it is by design.

Look at what is happening in the Saguenay with Rio Tinto. When Rio Tinto bought Alcan, it did not just buy plants. This foreign corporation became the owner of the Saguenay riverbed. Think about it. When foreign entities take this type of control over a Canadian corporation there has to be a net benefit to Canada. That is mandated by law. By the way, assessments used to be done automatically at a certain level, but now the government is raising that level to \$1 billion.

Things that used to be assessed will no longer be. But let us look at what they have done. Even when they were doing assessments, they ticked off the box “net benefit to Canada” for the takeover of Alcan by Rio Tinto. What happened?

European authorities responsible for competition asked companies to divest themselves of their highly specialized metal production. No problem, they sold it off to an American. What happened next? The Americans flipped it to an Indian multinational. Then, they said things were not very good there and they moved to the United States.

Jobs were lost overnight and there was no protection for the workers. Such is the Conservatives' attitude.

Just look at what is happening. Employees are still locked out at Rio Tinto in Alma. What do the Conservatives care? To them, this is like a warning. The barbarians arrive. They destroy the village. They leave the people at the entrance to the village and tell them to look closely at what is on the horizon and to get used to it. That is what they are doing: dismantling and destroying decades, generations of protections that help society as a whole, by dismantling our entire system of protecting social rights and workers' rights.

• (1645)

[*English*]

We need to look at the Conservative net benefit. We have just looked at Rio Tinto Alcan in Alma in the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean region where workers have been on lockout for six months. Is that a net benefit for Canada to have everybody locked out? The Conservatives approved the takeover of Inco by Brazil's Vale in 2006. Vale proposed in 2009 to end defined benefit pensions for new employees. Then the USWA goes on strike and it lasts nearly one year. That is the future for workers under the Conservatives.

A Swiss-based mining company, Xstrata, absorbed Falconbridge in 2006. The takeover deal said “no layoffs for three years”. In 2009, Xstrata laid off 700 people and 700 families lost their living because they did not understand that a net benefit meant not just a net benefit for the shareholders but also a net benefit for the families that work there.

I have one of the best illustrations of the Conservatives' approach. I will start with a reference to what happened during the 2011 general election. Our current Prime Minister went out and visited the lovely company in London, Ontario called Electro-Motive Diesel. He used it as a backdrop. He used it as a model. As a matter of fact, since there was nothing that the Conservatives would not do during the election, they touted a \$5 million tax break with no strings attached. The company did not need to create any work and it could take the \$5 million. That is what he did during the 2011 election campaign.

A U.S. company called Caterpillar had bought Electro-Motive Diesel in 2010. What happened in the months that followed? In January 2012, 450 Electro-Motive Diesel employees were locked out. Why? It was because they were being unreasonable. They were only being asked to take a 50% pay cut. After all, the company had been given \$5 million and it was only asking for 50%, otherwise it must have been 60% it had been thinking of.

In February 2012, just a few months ago, the plant closed and the operation moved. What a net benefit for Canada.

Government Orders

The government announced plans last week to raise takeover review to \$1 billion, and there will be even more reckless foreign takeovers that will fly under the radar. Other working Canadians are forced to fight for their pension funds that they paid into for their golden years.

[*Translation*]

I remember when the Prime Minister stood up and said he would not touch pensions. That is one of my favourite tricks of this government. The Prime Minister said he would not touch pensions. When they added two years of work and subtracted \$12,000, the Minister of Finance stood up and said:

[*English*]

“We said that we would not touch pensions. We never said that we would not touch old age security”, as if for the average Canadian it was not one in the same thing, their revenue when they were going to retire.

Unprecedented attacks on workers, unprecedented attacks on the middle-class, that is the legacy of the Conservatives and that is why we are here standing up today.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the leader of the official opposition will be familiar with past history and back-to-work legislation that has been presented in this chamber.

Through some of the government's interventions today, we find that it tries to blur the line between legislation that was presented in 1995 and its actions today with this back-to-work legislation.

In 1995, when VIA, CN and CP were all in the midst of a labour dispute and rail had ground to a halt, the Liberal government brought forward back-to-work legislation and the NDP supported that legislation.

Could the leader share with people watching this debate at home what the difference is between 1995 and now?

• (1650)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, we have never before seen a government develop and deliver such a concerted attack on workers' rights. It is systematic. Our vision is to build a Canada where no one is left behind, where we leave more for future generations, not less, where we talk about what we can accomplish, not what we cannot do.

The Conservatives are all about being negative, that we should not be doing this, that we should chop the size of government, that we cannot afford this. They are removing some of the extraordinary programs and services and ideas and institutions we have built up that are a reflection of our fundamental goodness as a people, our specificity as a nation. That is why we say that all of those values will be defended by the New Democratic Party. That is our vision for the future verses theirs.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition consistently attacks Canadian business and its profitability. At the same time, he puts his hand on heart and claims that he wants to protect the

pensions of the workers who are invested in those very same companies. I will give the House one example.

The member mentioned Canada Post. The first five top holdings in the Canada Post pension plan are all banks and oil companies, every one of them. All of the returns therefore that are paid to those unionized mail deliverers come out of the after tax profits of banks and oil companies.

When he tries to divide businesses against workers, he might learn that in our modern economy, in many cases, they are the same people. Workers, through their pension funds, own businesses. His proposed tax increases on those businesses would not only suppress jobs in the business, but would suppress the returns for the pension funds he has claimed he wants to protect.

How does the member reconcile that obvious mathematical contradiction?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, it will surprise my colleague when he hears me say that I actually for once agree with something the Conservatives say. The Prime Minister thinks it is unfair that only union members should have a guaranteed benefit pension. We agree with him, because everybody should have a right to a guaranteed benefit pension.

Instead of doing like he does, which is always seeking the lowest common denominator to seeking what we cannot do, our vision is to provide the best government we can, develop programs that see people to their retirement and the ability to live with dignity. Why? Not only do they deserve it after a lifetime of work, but it is good for the economy that retired people are able to take part in that economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to ask a question following on the wonderful speech by my leader, the member for Outremont and leader of the official opposition, who has described the situation very accurately.

I think that in his speech he has shown the House the trajectory, the direction, being taken by the Conservatives. They are putting downward pressure on working conditions and living conditions for families in Quebec and Canada. That is unacceptable to the NDP.

I would like to ask the member for Outremont whether he thinks the Conservatives are altering the broader framework of collective bargaining. With Canada Post, with two cases involving Air Canada, and now with Canadian Pacific, are they not attacking the freedom to bargain, a principle that is protected by the Charter of Rights and that the NDP stands up for?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, yes, and this is not some utopian fantasy; it is a right guaranteed by the charter that has been consistently enforced by the Supreme Court over the years.

I want to step outside the frame of labour relations for a moment and talk about a related subject, the behaviour of the government. We will all remember the extraordinary job done in Vancouver by my colleague, the deputy leader of the NDP, to get a safe injection site.

Government Orders

The Conservatives wanted nothing to do with it. For ideological reasons, they said it was nonsense and we could not have it. In a decision that was unprecedented in the history of Canadian jurisprudence, the Supreme Court lectured the Conservative government and told it that it could not base its decisions on an ideology, on superstition or on Conservative articles of faith. No, it had to base them on something that is foreign to the Conservatives: facts and evidence. Therein lies the difference.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will briefly follow up on the question the Leader of the Opposition was asked by the Liberal Party. I thought it was an excellent question, however, we did not get an answer.

I would like to know, and I think most Canadians would like to know, if the NDP has supported back-to-work legislation in the past with the organization. When does the Leader of the Opposition believe it is time for the government to act for all Canadians and that he would support? Is it after a week, or two weeks or six months of nothing happening in terms of commercial rail activity? Would the NDP tell Canadians when it would finally act on their behalf?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the difference in the point of view between the member who just spoke and us is that we actually believe it is in the interest of all Canadians to have a system of labour negotiations, a system of labour rights. We believe that is in everyone's interest.

The difference between what exists with his government and any other situation that has existed before in the history of Canada is now we have a government that is sending such a clear signal to employers, "Don't even make an effort. Don't even talk".

Mr. Mike Wallace: They made an effort. They were at it for weeks.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Before Air Canada even went out, the Conservatives had special legislation. They has it before they even started discussions. What possible interest is there for any employer to negotiate in good faith? There is none.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like a little order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor and he would like to respond to the question.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, I could not hear the exact words, but I just took it as an encouragement to continue.

This has never before happened in the history of Canada, that the Parliament of Canada is used as a management tool. We are not management tools. We are here to represent and stand up for all Canadians, including the workers' rights. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Madam Speaker, what does the Leader of the Opposition think it says about a government that is so prepared to take away the rights of working people, the rights of senior citizens, the rights of people who want a protected and clean environment, the rights of people who want a protected and sustainable fishery? What does he think it

says about a government that is prepared to trample all Canadians' rights?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: It is a question of vision, Madam Speaker. Ours is a vision of a sustainable future, where we respect the rights of future generations. Theirs is a vision of how we can do less. The Conservatives are always removing things.

Fifty years ago, it was decided in the country that no family would ever have to decide between having their sick child seen by a doctor and putting groceries on the table.

In a meeting with the finance minister, before Christmas, \$31 billion was taken out of the proposed funding for medicare. That is the type of institution the Conservatives are dismantling. They are dismantling workers' rights. They are dismantling all of the good things we have built up over the generations.

We are going to stand up against that and we are going to stand up for a future for—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to stand today and split my time with my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

I am pleased to speak today in support of this act before us to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations.

Let us look at this dispute from the perspective of Canadian farmers across our great country. Whenever the government intervenes in a labour dispute, and we have seen flights of fantasy from the other side in this argument today, the members on the opposite side will always accuse us of acting too hastily. There were a number of things offered to the management and union, such as another 120 days of arbitration and months leading us up to this point, which was all to no avail. However, when I hear the rhetoric coming from the members opposite, there are no answers to the hard questions.

I ask the Liberal member for Wascana this. How long should farmers wait? Should we wait until the hard-won gains that our country has made in digging out from the economic downturn are lost?

I ask the NDP member for Winnipeg Centre this. Should we wait until the canola piles up across the Prairies?

I ask the NDP agricultural critic from Quebec this. Should we wait until our red meat buyers around the world change suppliers?

I ask the NDP member for Welland this. Should we wait until Canada's world-class brand as a top quality food supplier is ruined?

Last, I ask the Liberal member for Guelph this. Does he think we should wait until farmers' delivery contracts are broken and we are facing punitive action?

Government Orders

The answers are loud and clear. Canadian farmers will not wait any longer for a resolution. Canadians want decisive action. That is what we are doing here today. They want Parliament to do what is necessary for the overall good of the Canadian economy. Canadian farmers and processors did not cause this dispute, but they are the ones who will ultimately pay the price. They will pay because of the economic repercussions of CP Rail grinding to a halt. They will pay not just in terms of financial costs, but also what it does to Canada's reputation as a trading nation. We are talking about an industry that last year accounted for over \$44 billion of our exports and one in eight jobs in our country.

Canada's world-class grain industry is a powerful engine of our economy, bringing \$16 billion back to the farm gate. Canadian grain farmers are well into their marketing plans for this year's crop. They have orders to fill around the world and are heavily dependent on the railways to move that product to market. They have just incurred huge costs for seed, fertilizer, fuel and other inputs needed to put a crop in the ground and those bills will be due soon. They count on delivering their grain at this time of year to build cashflow. Across Canada many producers and processors export up to 85% of their production.

I cannot overstate the urgency of resolving this labour stoppage for the hard-working men and women who put food on our tables and tables around the world. We all know our rail-based logistics system is complex. It involves a range of stakeholders from the railways themselves to shippers, terminal operators, transloaders, ports, shipping lines and trucks, all part of a global supply chain. In this global supply chain that is so interconnected, any glitch or work stoppage affects the whole system. For a trading nation such as Canada, it is key that all players in the supply chain provide efficient and effective service to strengthen our economic performance.

Farmers are asking us to act and to act now. The Canola Council of Canada wrote to the government to express its concern. It said, "As an industry that depends heavily on rail transport for both exports and domestic processing, any work stoppage will have a crippling effect on canola farmers, processors, crushers and exporters served exclusively by CPR".

This is another quote, this time from the Grain Growers of Canada, which said, "No grain shipments means no grain sales means no cash back into farmers' pockets states".

The CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board said, "We rely completely on two railways, CN and CP, to move this grain to port from the Prairies, and there are no alternative shipping methods".

Ian White added that there was \$50 million worth of grain sitting in elevators on the Prairies instead of moving to the ports, including Vancouver where six boats were waiting. He said that grain shipments on another eight were on their way in.

Norm Hall, president of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, said, "We cannot truck our grain to export positions... We don't have the trucks available, we don't have the highway system available...so we've only got railroads".

The Minister of Labour took the appropriate action to assist the parties in an attempt to reach a negotiated settlement. She worked with the parties toward this negotiated settlement.

Our government believes in the principles of free collective bargaining. We have offered all of the resources of the federal mediation and conciliation service to CP Rail and the union.

● (1700)

We firmly believe that negotiated agreements are still the best possible outcome. Unfortunately, the elements needed to make that happen are nowhere in sight and the clock is ticking for our farmers.

Our farmers cannot control the weather, but this is one risk we can help them to manage. Our farmers cannot access new markets if they cannot get their product to existing markets. The sheer size of our land mass means that Canadian farmers depend on rail service more than in many other countries. With strong prices and demand for our farmers' world-class products, the last thing they need is a rail disruption. Today's global marketplace is just too competitive for our farmers to run the risk of not getting their product to market and losing those good quality customers.

I call on all members of the House to support this motion and to support this bill. Specifically, I call on the member for Wascana to stop playing politics with rail. He howls about a rail review to help farmers. Here is a real chance for him to help farmers, and he goes silent. That is shameful.

They supported back-to-work legislation for CN in 2007. I wonder what has changed today.

Canadians can be proud they have a government that is making sure our economy is not jeopardized by risky union tactics. Sadly, we also have an opposition that will never understand agriculture, given that it recently attacked the red meat sector and recklessly claimed that processors would use roadkill in their facilities. We all know the opposition will not stop trying to divide Canadians by attacking Canada's responsible resource development.

Hopefully today all opposition members realize the importance of rail for agriculture and for the overall Canadian economy.

● (1705)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I suppose a question that is very important for the government to answer at this point is that it must demonstrate the panic button that is forcing it, as its members claim, to shut down debate on any of these questions. We have had two of these motions today. The Conservatives seem to be in some sort of effort to break records when it comes to shutting down democratic free and fair debate in this country.

Government Orders

Does the minister not feel at all that the government in fact poisoned the well in these negotiations? Less than 10 hours into the strike mandate the government produced back-to-work legislation. The employer knew this in advance.

How is this not a cynical effort by government in this negotiation and in all future ones to do two things: to send a clear and precise message to employers that free and fair collective bargaining is not important to them anymore, a right that is constitutionally protected, as has been clearly outlined by our leader; second, to send a message to Canadians and Parliament that debate is no longer a problem with which the government is going to have to occupy itself, because it will just shut it down?

The government has invoked closure and censure on Parliament 23 times since being elected to a majority, breaking all records. I do not understand how the minister, who comes from a party that had a history against such moves, seems so comfortable with this process and this procedure.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: In this case, Madam Speaker, we are looking for practical, pragmatic decisions not political gains. This costs almost \$100 million a day to the overall Canadian economy. I just outlined some of the things with regard to agriculture but, of course, there are a lot of other industries, right from car parts to whole cars, to beef, to all sorts of things moving by rail, and at almost \$100 million a day, how many hours and how many days do those people want to chat while this all goes down the drain?

As a government, we offered CP Rail and the union another 120 days of arbitration to make sure they had time to move this forward. The union said no, so we are standing very solidly here. We will continue to move ahead on the side of the Canadian economy.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question for the minister is this. For years now, farmers have been held hostage by the rail companies, and the minister is well aware of it. The rail service review disclosed that fact, talked of remedies, and yet for a full year the minister has been comatose when it comes to responding to the needs of farmers. Now, suddenly, he is up in his seat supporting an immediate resolution to this disruption of service.

Why would he not give the same attention to the rail service review and honour farmers and the needs they have expressed to him time and time again by bringing that review to a conclusion?

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Of course, Madam Speaker, we did exactly that in Agriculture Canada. We put together a subset under the Transport Canada umbrella led by Jim Dinning, the crop logistics working group, co-chaired by my deputy minister and Gordon Bacon of the Canadian Special Crops Association. They held hearings with all the affected industries. They were looking for efficiencies and effective handling agreements for all aspects of that value chain.

The railways are a major part of that, and we are working toward that conclusion and we will have tools in the toolbox moving forward for farmers to make use of very soon. However, if the member is in such a hurry, he has the opportunity today to prove to farmers that he is on their side, in their camp, and get those trains moving again and get that \$50 million worth of grain off the Prairies, into the Vancouver port and onto those boats. Why will he not do that?

•(1710)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to the speeches this afternoon, and the Leader of the Opposition consistently would not answer how long he would let this dispute go on, but the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food knows.

I am from Oshawa, and in Oshawa we build cars. We need parts to build cars. If there are no parts, there are no cars. If there are no cars, there are no jobs and no economy in my community.

We have heard that the Leader of the Opposition feels that jobs are a disease. He has been very clear about that. I thought it was only the resource sector, the oil sands and out in the mining sector, but now he is attacking farmers and the manufacturing sector.

If the minister can answer, how long does he think the NDP would go on without supporting a return to the economy—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Gerry Ritz: Madam Speaker, to my friend from Oshawa, I think it would go on in perpetuity.

Certainly NDP members are complaining about putting unionized employees back to work at CP Rail. At the same time, the longer this drags on, they are putting out of work the unionized employees in Oshawa, the unionized workers in a lot of agricultural elevators and so on out west, those in the Vancouver ports and Thunder Bay, all of which are unionized jobs. So they have cherry-picked a certain group and say they will go to bat for them, but they would put the rest of those guys at risk. I do not think that is a tenable situation. We have to look at the overall package.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Madam Speaker, the act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations is designed to address the labour dispute between CP Rail and two units of approximately 4,420 employees, rail traffic controllers, locomotive engineers, conductors, train men and yard men represented by the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference.

Our government has grave concern regarding the complete shutdown of the services of CP Rail, which is having a negative impact on Canada's economy. The global economy is extremely fragile, especially in Europe.

[*Translation*]

Our government's priorities are job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity. The work stoppage at the Canadian Pacific Railway is costing the Canadian economy more than \$540 million every week, and if it goes on, it could endanger the jobs of thousands of Canadians.

Government Orders

Our government has taken the first step toward enacting back-to-work legislation, to end the work stoppage at Canadian Pacific, in the interests of the Canadian economy. This bill will end the work stoppage and will submit the disputes between Canadian Pacific and the TCRC to an interest-based arbitration process.

[English]

Canadians have mandated our Conservative government to protect our national interests in a period of global economic uncertainty. The message cannot be clearer. We need to protect the people of Canada and the economic recovery upon which we are all counting. If we are to enjoy growth and prosperity in the years ahead, it is clearly the only course of action. I cannot emphasize too strongly that time is of the essence here, and that is why we must act now. We must stop the harm to Canadian businesses and restore confidence.

I will give the House an indication of the kinds of businesses that are being harmed as a result of this work stoppage. According to CP Rail's annual report, 44% of CP Rail's revenue is generated by the transport of bulk commodities including grain, coal, sulphur and fertilizers; 30% from merchandise freight including industrial, consumer and automotive products; and 26% from intermodal traffic. By intermodal traffic, we mean the movement of goods by more than one means of transport. In Mississauga—Brampton South, we are a hub for intermodal traffic. We are home to many trucking freight haulers. These run the spectrum from self-employed new immigrants to large logistics firms. The nation's largest airport is next door and more than 12,000 businesses surround our airport, and most rely on intermodal transport in some manner. With no trains running, the implications of this work stoppage are widespread.

In addition to impacting intermodal traffic, halting the movement of different types of commodities, the work stoppage is also impacting our local auto industry. Auto parts are the third-largest container import good that enters Canada through Port Metro Vancouver. This work stoppage is preventing these parts from being shipped to manufacturers in my community in Ontario. Without the parts they need, assembly lines may slow or stop, resulting in lost production and, depending on the duration of the work stoppage, possible layoffs of our neighbours.

As members can see, countless employees in diverse sectors of our economy are affected by the shutdown of CP Rail. Weston Forest Products, one of my local companies, which relies on CP Rail to transport lumber, has had to alter its business models and it is costing it greatly. My neighbours in Mississauga—Brampton South are concerned about the economy and therefore would like to see an end to this dispute as soon as possible.

CP Rail annually transports freight in Canada valued at about \$50 billion. Transport Canada tells us that in 2010 CP Rail handled 74% of potash, 57% of wheat, 53% of coal and 39% of containers moved in our country. CP Rail's network operates in six provinces and thirteen states. This network extends to the U.S. industrial centres of Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, Washington, New York City and Buffalo. Agreements with other carriers extend CP's market reach east of Montreal, within Canada and throughout the United States and into Mexico. These geographical names alone tell us how strongly CP Rail is written into the story of Canada's economic

success, not only for transport of goods within the country but also for trade with other nations including ones in Asia.

• (1715)

CP Rail is a vital link in moving freight to and from Canada's west coast ports, which are an integral part of the Asia-Pacific gateway. This work stoppage is undermining Canada's reputation as a reliable place to do business, a setback from which it could take years to recover lost business for Canadians.

The Minister of Labour has heard from numerous stakeholders, who have all been very clear in urging the government to take action to prevent a prolonged work stoppage at CP Rail.

The minister has heard from the automobile sector, which is very worried. Many of my neighbours who work at Ford are somewhat concerned. Ford relies heavily on rail for the transport of parts and finished vehicles across the country. If the strike is prolonged, Ford will be forced to make some tough decisions on whether it can maintain production operations during a strike. We have also heard from GM, Honda and Toyota. Automobile manufacturers are worried. They are nearing the point of having to shut down their plants temporarily.

As we heard from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food earlier, farmers and others in the agricultural sector are worried. There are not a lot of options when it comes to transporting goods. The trucking industry cannot pick up the slack for CP Rail's work stoppage. The movement of goods will be stalled.

I know that every member of the House wants to see Canada's economy grow and our success as a nation continue. We want to retain our enviable position of being one of the few nations in the western world to weather the global economic downturn.

The MPs sitting across from me in the House may not always agree with us on the best ways to keep Canada's economy strong; nevertheless, we are all of one mind when it comes to this common goal.

Our Conservative government continues to work diligently to ensure we have all the right factors in place to maintain Canada's economic success story, and Canadians can be proud that ours is a story envied by many other countries. Canadians welcome our investments in people, families and communities throughout the nation. They see that these investments work and they are counting on us, with good reason, to help them build for their very secure future.

Government Orders

Our concern is that the stoppage at CP Rail is jeopardizing our work and our achievement today. It is putting our economy seriously at risk. As we have witnessed time and time again in Canada's history, the best and longest-lasting solutions to labour disputes occur when the parties come together to resolve their differences without a strike or lockout. It is very heartening that when the labour program's professional mediators and conciliation officers get involved in negotiations, 94% of the disputes are resolved without a strike or lockout, and this is undoubtedly the best option. Regrettably, agreements were not reached and a strike has occurred. When the national economy and the public interest are affected, as they are in this case, our government has no choice but to act.

To round out my remarks on this situation, I would like to give the House some background on the dispute. On December 31, 2011, the collective agreement expired for both units of employees represented by TCRC. The parties began negotiations earlier in the fall. On February 17 of this year, the Minister of Labour received notices of dispute from the employer. On March 2, the labour program appointed conciliation officers to work with the parties. The parties were released from conciliation on May 1, 2012, and began a strike on May 23.

The Government of Canada has done its utmost throughout the negotiation process to encourage both parties to reach agreements. However, despite assistance from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the parties were unable to resolve their differences. In fact, the parties declined an offer by the Minister of Labour to provide them with extended mediation. They declined the offer.

At this critical juncture, we must take action as parliamentarians. We must end the rail service stoppage that is undermining the economic recovery of all Canadians.

We have worked very hard to nurture this economic recovery. I therefore urge all members of the House to support this bill. Let us do the right thing for Canadians. Let us do the right thing for my neighbours in Mississauga—Brampton South. Let us take action to protect our economy.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question will be quite simple. It will consist of a role play of about 30 seconds.

Imagine that my esteemed colleague is the CEO of a big company and that negotiations are in full swing. My question is quite simple. Would her calculation of losses be the same if she knew that the strike would last for a maximum of seven days as if she did not know? Would she have the same attitude at the bargaining table if she knew ahead of time what the outcome of the negotiations would be?

[*English*]

Ms. Eve Adams: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, I recently walked on the floor of West End Lumber products. This is a privately owned company that has won awards numerous times for being one of the best-managed private companies in Canada.

I happened to walk the mill floor with employees who have served that company for over a decade. There were numerous employees. They are well treated and are very happy to work there.

This is a company that relies on the rails to ship their product. My question back to the opposition member is this: why does the opposition, the NDP, consistently pick union members and union workers and somehow give them some priority over average hard-working Canadians? Why is it that his party is constantly choosing those union workers instead of every Canadian?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what we have seen with the various pieces of legislation as they have come forward is that in private companies within the realm of federally regulated industries, there appears to be an assault on employees' pension plans.

The sense from most people who work in the sector is a belief that these companies are seeing the government's actions as an off-ramp to attack the pension plans. What we are seeing time and time again with this back-to-work legislation, in one example after another, is that it is making it easier just to rag the puck during negotiations, and it will become part of general business practice.

Does the parliamentary secretary see the risk to worker pensions that we are facing in following this path, in allowing the back-to-work legislation? Does she see the risk in this?

Ms. Eve Adams: Madam Speaker, our government supports free collective bargaining. A negotiated settlement is always the best solution.

As I indicated during my remarks, the Minister of Labour offered both sides an extension to their discussions, offered them an additional 120 days, and they chose not to take it.

We have heard time and time again from all the speakers today about the dramatic impact that the stoppage of rail services is having on the Canadian economy, whether it is the farming sector or the automotive sector. It is putting Canada's economy in peril. We need to act.

We have tried to have discussions. We would always prefer that a solution be found through discussion, but at some point we need to keep the best interests of all Canadians front and centre.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to stress that this is not the government's first choice.

We wish that the two parties would come together for a mediated solution, but it just is not working out that way, unfortunately. Responsible governments have to step in at some point and take a responsible approach to putting the pieces back together.

I would like to ask the hon. member her thoughts on why we need to expedite this process of getting CP back to work. Could she explain why we need to expedite the process?

• (1725)

Ms. Eve Adams: Madam Speaker, we always want a negotiated solution. Those are the ones that work out, ideally in the best interests of the employees and the companies, but the time has come to act. The cost to the Canadian economy is substantial and significant, and that is why we are bringing forward this legislation today.

Private Members' Business

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I should start by saying that due to a lack of time for debate, I will have to share my speaking time with the member for Newton—North Delta. The first problem I have with this debate—one that has resurfaced repeatedly over the past year—is the reduction in time for debate and discussion in this House. It makes it very difficult to properly consider issues. It is almost ridiculous to think that we could cover an issue as important as the one we have before us today—and study it in depth—in 10 minutes. Unfortunately, after 10 minutes, my time will be up, but I would like to leave as much time as possible to other members of my party, so that they, too, can speak about this issue.

Others before me have already said this, but I think that Canadians need to hear it again: the government's attitude today is destructive, not only to the quality of economic life, but especially—and it is difficult to make the connection between the two—to the quality of the economic and democratic life of our country.

I do not say this glibly, and the government would be quite wrong to think that my objective is simply to get the attention of the people watching us for 10 minutes.

Canadians' time, and the time of members in this House, is far too precious to rise and wax lyrical without conviction and resolve. I will therefore ask a couple of questions of the government so that all Canadians get a better sense of what is troubling about this government's attitude.

Here is my first question: does the Conservative government really trust Canadians? This question may seem simplistic, because the Conservatives repeat day in and day out that Canadians have given them a clear and strong mandate. Aside from the fact that this mandate is rather meagre and increasingly unclear, it seems today that the government is governing on behalf of an even smaller minority, rather than the huge majority of Canadians who are no longer being heard and who feel less and less represented by this Conservative government.

When I think of Canadians, I think of the workers of this country, but also of the employers and investors who play a role in the economic development and prosperity of all. Let me repeat: if there is going to be economic growth in Canada—and there must be—there needs to be growth for all.

I do not think the government trusts Canadians, because it does not believe that parties that talk and negotiate can come to a fair and balanced agreement or, as the saying goes, to a win-win agreement.

When Canadian Pacific workers went out on strike, the government moved quickly to block the process that would make it possible to reach a solution.

I will pass over countless issues that I find difficult to address and go directly to my conclusion and say how I feel the government's action constitutes a twofold mistake. With this motion, the government is discrediting the work of members of Parliament. We are here in this House to build a country and not—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I must explain to the hon. member that he will have six more minutes to

complete his speech when the House resumes debate after the time provided for private members' business.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

• (1730)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, then I will get back to the heart of the matter since I will have six minutes a little later, which will suit me fine.

So I was on my first question, which I have here: do the Conservatives trust Canadians?

The government's attitude of belittling—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member will have six more minutes to complete his speech when the House resumes debate on the motion, probably at 6:30 p.m.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

IMPORTATION OF INTOXICATING LIQUORS ACT

The House resumed from April 4 consideration of Bill C-311, An Act to amend the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act (interprovincial importation of wine for personal use), as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed

Mr. Dan Albas moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Private Members' Business

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin tonight with sincere thanks, not only to my colleagues in caucus, but to all members of the House for the unanimous all party support they have shown for Bill C-311. Tonight we have a chance as parliamentarians to change history, to right a wrong that was created 80 years ago and to help a relatively small but thriving wine industry that we as Canadians should all be very proud of. This is an issue that unites all Canadians. In Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia, and all across this great country, many citizens are watching and hoping that common sense and doing the right thing will guide us this evening. I will keep my comments relatively brief as this is a time-sensitive issue.

First, I would like to provide members of the House with a brief update on Bill C-311.

[*Translation*]

My bill proposes an amendment to the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act. This amendment creates an individual exception respecting location.

[*English*]

During the committee stage review we heard first hand the immense frustrations from many of our Canadian wineries. Canadian wineries can legally ship wine directly to customers in Hong Kong and Japan, but not legally to customers in Calgary, or anywhere else in Canada.

Even closer to home, if we were lucky enough to leave the House tonight and cross over into Gatineau to buy wine and return back into Ottawa, we would have broken this out-of-date Prohibition era federal law. For a first offence we could be subject to a fine of up to \$200 and or imprisonment for up to three months. If we were on vacation in the beautiful Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, or the Niagara region of Ontario, and brought back wine with us to our home province, we would have also broken this outdated law. Canadians are quite rightly often shocked by this.

There are over 130 VQA wineries in Ontario and none of them can legally sell one bottle of wine to Saskatchewan. There are over 200 wineries in British Columbia and not one can legally directly sell or ship one bottle of wine to Alberta. They can sell to Asia, yes, but not to Alberta. The fact is, it is easier for Canadian wineries to sell outside Canada directly, as they cannot legally do so within the borders of our own great country. This is something that needs to change.

● (1735)

[*Translation*]

There are currently nearly 50 wineries in Quebec. Times have changed, and it is high time to change the legislation.

[*English*]

All across Canada I have heard overwhelming support calling for this change. We have an opportunity to make history. We can put an end to this out-of-date and unjust law and allow our outstanding Canadian wineries to be able to sell directly to Canadians. All we need to do is support sending Bill C-311 on to the other place.

Before I close, there are a few comments that I ask all members of this House to be mindful of.

Our Canadian wine industry needs our help. "Made in Canada" VQA wine productions make only 6% of the Canadian domestic wine market. "Cellared in Canada" occupies a further 26% share. This means that 68% of our wine market is served by imported wines. Anything that we can do to help increase our wine production would mean more jobs here in Canada. That is why I am asking for members' support for Bill C-311.

The reason I am keeping my comments relatively brief is one of time. If members of this House can support sending Bill C-311 on to the other place this evening, this would have an immediate impact in helping our Canadian wineries capitalize on this year's grape cycle. If we cannot find a way to support the bill tonight and end up with a second hour of debate, we will in effect enter into another growing cycle. That would be an opportunity lost for hundreds of small Canadian wineries that are hoping today is the day we come through for them. I have not met a single winery owner who does not intend to reinvest and expand his or her wine operation in some way as a result of the bill. That would not only help the wine industry, it would also help support our local economy.

Tonight, the fate of Bill C-311 is in members' hands. We have a chance to change history and take a small but important step that would open up the Canadian marketplace for our small Canadian family-run wineries. I ask that we take this step together and request members' continued support for Bill C-311.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I went to a tasting of wines from Nova Scotia, here on Parliament Hill.

Being a fan of wine, particularly white wine, when I go to buy wine from the Société des alcools du Québec, the SAQ, I buy wines from France or Germany. They are my favourites.

However, during that tasting, I discovered a passion for Nova Scotian wines, which I would very much like to buy. However, as a result of this current archaic act, we may not import wines from other provinces.

Can my Conservative colleague tell me how much it would help Canada's domestic economy if we changed these regulations so that Québec wine lovers like me could buy the good wine of Nova Scotia?

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the member has taken a liking to the wines of Nova Scotia. I am sure many members of this House would agree with him. They do make some fine wines in Nova Scotia. As well, Quebec is an aspiring region.

Private Members' Business

As we heard at the finance committee, many of the wineries in Nova Scotia, also, would like to see their wines being marketed. One of the challenges that they face is that, even though they have an abundance of farmland so that they can grow the grapes and then use them, they have some of the lowest wine consumption rates in this country. They need to grow their markets. Going from 1 million people in Nova Scotia to 36 million people across this great country would be quite an opportunity.

● (1740)

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in this House on a bill that has so completely brought everyone together. I thank the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla for bringing it forward.

I am going to rise to say a few words on it a little later in this hour—not too long, I hope, to interfere with the process—but I have a question. Might this eventually extend to interprovincial barriers on transporting beer, for example? There are a lot of microbreweries around the country doing a wonderful job. They are creating jobs and producing great product.

I am fully supportive of this for the wine industry. What are the barriers to moving forward, in future, on to other local products?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, the Okanagan region, where I come from, has over 100 wineries. Most are small family operations. Many of them simply lack the volume to sell through the traditional government liquor distribution system and so this is an important policy for them. As their MP in Ottawa, it is an issue I am happy to take forward on their behalf.

I have been contacted with support from other wineries across Canada, but I have only received a few contacts with regard to that. Every industry is different and has different needs. What I have heard from the wine industry, large and small producers right across this country, is that they support this amendment.

It might be an idea for us as members to speak with the industry representatives to see how we could help grow the economy in other industries such as beer.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member very much on behalf of the fine wine producers in the riding of Prince Edward—Hastings. I do not think the member would object to a little plug. We have over 30 world-class wineries.

I am so pleased to be able to second the bill. It is so long overdue. To literally make a crime from an issue that most people take as a foregone conclusion is a classic oversight. I would like to say, on behalf of this House and colleagues I have talked to on this side, who I know will give unanimous consent, time is of the essence on this bill for our producers. Would the member please give us a little more reinforcement on why we need this bill tonight?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague has done a tremendous amount of work on this issue. It is important that we see this bill go forward. There are people in the grape growing sector, vintners and consumers, who have been waiting 84 years for this legislation to be clarified, for the federal government to get out of the way so that we can free our grapes.

I hope that all members will consider them and the families of those vintners as this grape growing season looms ahead.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say a few words in support of Bill C-311. I would like to thank my colleague for Okanagan—Coquihalla for taking the initiative to introduce the bill.

I know there is pressure to fast-track the bill through Parliament, and I understand that. However, it should be noted that this issue is not new. The Canadian Vintners Association has been requesting more flexibility in our liquor laws for a number of years.

I became involved a few years ago. I wrote the minister on September 2010 and received a very favourable response. At the time, he mentioned that he was soliciting input from provinces and territories to enter into a consensus-building approach to explore the impact of the limitations in place under the act. Subsequently, we had more communication. It is my understanding that this was in the process.

To those who say that we need to go very quickly, I understand that. However, we should put this in context: this issue has been under consideration for a while. Theoretically, the government could have introduced legislation long ago and resolved the issue. That did not happen and we are here today debating this important bill.

Hopefully we can move it forward today. It would certainly be very appropriate if we could change this law before the summer tourist season.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Why is this bill important?

First, it would allow consumers to buy a reasonable quantity of wine directly for personal consumption. The quantity would be defined by each province.

Let us not forget that it is illegal for me, for example, to go to a winery in Ontario, buy a bottle of wine there and take that bottle home with me to British Columbia. It is absurd.

This bill would also address the legal issues surrounding interprovincial wine tourism and would allow wineries to ship their products, including products ordered online, directly to customers in other provinces, according to the limits set by those provinces.

So to support this bill is to support choice for consumers. It would greatly benefit Canadians to have a wider choice of wines, particularly from small wineries all over Canada.

We must remember that the Canadian wine industry is beginning to make an international reputation for itself as a temperate zone wine producer. It has won an impressive number of awards and has earned the praise of a number of the world's most influential countries in terms of wine appreciation.

Making this act more flexible would broaden the choice, while still maintaining the monopoly enjoyed by each province's liquor board.

Private Members' Business

[English]

While I am here I will give a plug to our B.C. government liquor stores and their employees. It is my understanding that the passage of Bill C-311 will not in any way interfere with our provincial liquor boards to serve citizens in our communities. Our government liquor stores are first-class with a wide variety of products and employees who are knowledgeable and proud of what they do. We should also not forget that they play a major role, with their half-decent wages, in contributing to the economy, especially in our small communities. Good union jobs in our small communities are the best guarantee of the survival of a small business. Government liquor store employees contribute significantly to the economy of the communities in which they live and work.

It is important, especially for our small rural communities, for everyone to rally in support of retaining well-paying jobs. I have spoken with representatives of chambers of commerce and labour about the idea of presenting a united front the next time there are proposed government cutbacks that threaten our workers and the way of life in our small communities.

I thank the Canadian Vintners Association, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and all the wineries in my riding, the riding of the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla, in Kelowna and right across the country. I have tasted fine wines in Ontario, too. These wineries have rallied in support of this legislation.

Hopefully very soon, ideally this summer, the summer tourists will be able to visit wineries in other provinces, buy a few bottles and take them home with them legally.

I thank my colleague from Okanagan—Coquihalla again for spearheading this important issue.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a confession to make. Through the work of my hon. colleague from Okanagan—Coquihalla, I have discovered that I have broken the law not just once but on numerous occasions, like many Canadians.

Last summer, I had the privilege of visiting my good friend, the MP for Kings—Hants, in the gorgeous Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia. We visited the Muir Murray Winery where I tasted a glass of the fine local product and promptly bought a bottle to bring home to my wife. On that flight home to Montreal from Halifax I broke the law.

A number of years ago, I visited my friend, Anthony von Mandl, who owns the Mission Hill Winery in the riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla, producing some of the finest wine in Canada. There are many fine wines in Canada but it is one of my personal favourites. I discovered a wine called Oculus, which is extraordinary. Again I brought a couple of bottles home and broke the law.

Similar stories happened when I visited friends in the Niagara region and friends right across the country. I am proud to say that Canadian wine producers are becoming world-class in their quality, in their extraordinary vision and in their sharing of an extraordinary product of our land.

For me, the fact that here in the House we discuss regularly free trade agreements that we are trying to reach out and sign around the world, whether it be with Europe, South America or places in Asia,

that we still are saddled with interprovincial barriers that prevent us from having truly free trade within Canada is something we certainly need to address.

Eighty years ago there was no perspective that there could be Canadian wineries but over the past 25 years or so they have come a long way. To finally be able to say that we are doing something is wonderful.

It is a shame that the current government did not decide to make it a bill but the previous Liberal government did not get around to it either. A tip of the hat to my colleague from Okanagan—Coquihalla for standing up, not just for his region but for regions across the country.

● (1750)

[Translation]

However, since I come from Quebec, I know that a lot of people are concerned about areas of provincial jurisdiction, including the fact that sales of alcohol are a provincial responsibility. In Quebec, the Société des alcools du Québec is certainly well aware of its authority to regulate the sale and consumption of alcohol in Quebec, so I was anxious to check whether in fact this bill, which the Liberal Party enthusiastically supports, is actually in accordance with those areas of jurisdiction.

Since it is a bill that is supported by consumers and producers all over Canada, we are already off to a good start. It respects provincial jurisdiction because, given that the province of destination controls what it imports, the province itself can determine what quantity of wine can be imported for personal use. When we come back from overseas, we can bring in 1.5 litres. In Ontario, we can bring back up to nine litres of Canadian wine. It is less elsewhere, but the ability to establish basic rules that say that this is legal and that allow each province to limit quantity is a very good thing.

The industry is growing, especially in Quebec. It has been 25 years now since a few producers ventured into winemaking in Quebec. Over the past five years, winemaking has boomed. Even though the financial means of the majority of businesses remain modest, the know-how of Quebec's wine producers and the development of highly specific and refined techniques are promising.

The wine is good. Quebec's ice wines are world-class wines. Approximately 100 medals have been awarded to the wines made by Quebec's wine producers. It is true that we have a bit of catching up to do compared to the awards given to the wines from Niagara, Okanagan, British Columbia and even Annapolis in Nova Scotia, but we are very competitive. All we need is a little extra help.

Private Members' Business

So it is a very good idea to encourage Canadians to visit our wineries in Quebec, to try wines across Canada and to bring them back home, and to discover our local products on another level. We are going to be able to show more pride in our Canadian products. We encourage people to come and visit the vineyards, to come and sample gourmet dishes and to discover wonderful places in the Eastern Townships.

Last weekend, during the National Patriots Day long weekend, I had a chance to visit the Eastern Townships with my family. We went to the Orpailleur vineyard in Dunham. I sampled a few good bottles and I would really like to be able to invite the hon. members of the House of Commons to come and discover our Quebec wines. I hope that we will be able to do so by passing this bill.

The Liberal Party and I are pleased and proud to support this bill, which will encourage our Canadian wine producers and Canadians in particular to be proud of our products from across the country.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will provide some summary remarks. I support this bill and appreciate the hard work of members in preparing and bringing forward this bill.

The prohibition on interprovincial liquor importation is governed at the federal level by the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act, the IILA, and, at the provincial-territorial level, by statutes that govern the importation, sale, transportation, warehousing and packaging of alcoholic beverages.

Bill C-311, which is an act to amend the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act for the purposes of personal use, proposes to amend the IILA by providing a new exemption to the prohibition on the interprovincial importation of intoxicating liquors, except for purchases made by provincial-territorial liquor boards, commissions or corporations. This bill would allow the importation of wine from a province by an individual if he or she brings the wine into another province for personal consumption. This importation would be required to be in quantities as permitted by the laws of that province or territory in which the wine is being imported.

Under current federal legislation, if an individual wishes to purchase wine that is available only in a province other than the one in which he or she resides, the individual must make the purchase through the provincial-territorial liquor board, commission or corporation and must pay the associated taxes, mark-up rates and other special levies on the alcohol. That is by way of summary.

In terms of some of the comments on this bill, I think the industry and the public consider the IILA administered by CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency, is the cause of the restricted trade. In reality, the combination of the IILA and the provincial legislation makes this trade illegal.

Pursuant to the IILA, all imports from one province into another must be made by the provincial liquor board or a private corporation designated by the province. This includes wine brought in by an individual from one province into another.

While the IILA does restrict interprovincial wine imports, provinces have the power to control the possession, sale, purchase and transport of wine within their respective jurisdictions. Provincial liquor boards impose a significant mark-up fee on wine produced or sold within a particular provincial jurisdiction. Most provincial legislations specifically allow a limited amount of wine for personal use to be brought into another province. For example, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario issued a news release in June of last year announcing a formal policy to permit up to nine litres of wine provided it accompanies the individual.

I know the hon. member who introduced this bill referred to the history, but I will add to it. The current law, which is section 3(1) of the IILA, stems from 1928 during the post-prohibition era when the various Canadian provinces were making the transition from prohibition to liquor board systems for liquor distribution. It created a restriction on both the transport of liquor across the provinces and provincial borders and the shipment of liquor between provinces unless the liquor was purchased by the liquor board in the destination province.

What we are looking for? I will go back to the bill. This bill would permit consumers to directly purchase wine in reasonable amounts for personal consumption, which is defined by each province and territory. It would address the legal issues related to interprovincial wine tourism and enable wineries to directly ship, including online, to consumers in provinces in compliance with provincial limits.

• (1800)

We support the bill as it stands, but we do have some suggestions for change as it moves forward. We support the matter of consumer choice. Canadians will certainly benefit from a greater selection of wine, especially smaller wineries across the country. The government needs to support the growing domestic industries, particularly in emerging wine-producing regions from Nova Scotia right across the country to British Columbia.

The Canadian wine industry is emerging as an internationally recognized cool climate wine producer, garnering an impressive list of awards and praise from many of the world's most influential wine critics. There are others that are onboard with the bill, including the Canadian Vintners Association, the Alliance of Canadian Wine Consumers and many wineries across the country.

I do want to make special note of British Columbia and the wine-making and wine-growing industry in our province. Vineyards, certainly in the interior of British Columbia, the Okanagan, Osoyoos, Kelowna and many other parts of the province, including Vancouver Island, which is certainly emerging as a wine-growing region, the Fraser Valley and pockets of the Fraser Canyon are becoming known for their wine or icewine.

Private Members' Business

There is also the idea of tourism and the importance of tourism in British Columbia as it relates to the bill, which would allow wine to be transported out of the province. B.C. is well-known for bringing in individuals from outside of British Columbia, from other provinces and territories, and also from other parts of the world. The United States, Europe and many other places around the world come to British Columbia for our fine wine and to enjoy what we have in that amazing part of Canada.

In summary, I will again lend my support to the bill. I strongly support the move to make an historical amendment to allow wine to be transported from province to province. I would like to see an amendment that would look at the labelling, which would include where the wine is made. That would enhance the bill.

Knowing where the wine comes from is quite critical. Consumers are not only enjoying wine, but they are becoming more sophisticated in knowing how the grapes are grown and where they come from. This is an important aspect that should be considered and included in the bill today.

Again, I thank the hon. member and previous members for their work on getting the bill to this stage.

● (1805)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am also happy to rise today in support of Bill C-311, an Act to amend the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act.

As a couple of my hon. colleagues have so elegantly stated, under the current legislation, if an individual wishes to purchase wine that is available only in a province other than the one in which he or she resides, the individual must make the purchase through a liquor board or commission. The changes to the IILA will change that and allow the importation of wine from a province by an individual.

This bill also strikes the right balance between ensuring that the province maintains jurisdiction over this and at the same time changing the federal law to allow the province more discretion.

The bill is a good idea. It is simple, but those are often the best ideas.

I had the great fortune of growing up in the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia. I was forced to leave in the 1980s. There was not a lot of work so I made my way out to beautiful Burnaby, British Columbia. I just had the opportunity to go back for my mother's birthday a couple of weeks ago and I did go down to the Annapolis Valley. I have been back a few times. The sun was out, it was a beautiful Victoria Day weekend and we had some beautiful wine from the Annapolis Valley region.

What a change there has been since the late 1980s until now and how the addition of vineyards to the Annapolis Valley has really changed and vastly improved the area and has done a lot for the local economy. It has brought tourists back to the region. When the wine is combined with lobster, apples and the produce there, it cannot be beat. I was really glad to see that.

Again, small changes like this to existing legislation can really go a long way to boosting that industry a bit more.

What I also noticed in Nova Scotia was the co-operation between vineyards. I thought that was a really good idea. They have come together and decided to produce this wine in all vineyards called l'Acadie, which is a great white wine. It is those kinds of co-operative actions between the vineyards, in association with changes to a law like this, that will help those vineyards and this industry grow in Canada.

I did not know this and was a little alarmed to hear that only 6% of the wine consumed in Canada was grown and aged here, which is something we should work to fix. With having wine experience on both coasts, there is a lot we can do and a lot to promote.

With respect to the other coast, after having grown up in Nova Scotia, and I liked the wines there, the wines in British Columbia are outstanding. There are 210 wineries and 864 vineyards from what I have been able to research. I am not just excited about the product, which I enjoy with my wife Jeanette, but I am also excited about the economic impacts to this industry.

Therefore, when I was reading the bill, and I am happy to support it, I was also thinking of this theory by Jane Jacobs, the great scholar. People know she talks about cities. She also talks about the idea of import replacement, which is a terrific idea. Initially, we import some technology or product, local people get to like it and they start developing it themselves and often improve it. However, what is more important for our economy in terms of wines is that the locally-produced product starts to replace what we used to import. If that goes really well, we start importing back to the place from which we used to buy product. This is a possibility for the Canadian wine industry over the next little while and it is changes like this that will help.

This is an industry that has to be nurtured. The French, Italian and South African wines are massive vineyards that could easily swamp our smaller vineyards in B.C., Nova Scotia and Ontario. We really have to be conscious of the fact that we want to help this industry grow along, and the bill does help that.

● (1810)

Something else my colleagues might want to know is that while teaching at Simon Fraser, I had a couple of colleagues who were looking at the genome technology in wines. This is under study in a lot of countries, and it is basically altering grapes. It is not done naturally. The genes in the grapes are manipulated and that is able to change the taste of wines, the speed of aging and those kinds of things.

Professors Michael Howlett and David Laycock had a very large grant from Genome Canada to study this. They just had a recent book out called *Regulating Next Generation Agri-Food Biotechnologies* by the Taylor & Francis Group.

Private Members' Business

We were reminded early on today this was an antiquated act that we were updating today, hopefully, if it goes through here and the next place, but we really have to be ready for the next generation of ideas about this. Therefore, I would suggest that at some point in the House or in an agricultural committee we could take a look at how genome technology affects this and other agricultural industries. It is important to get the policies right in these areas, to approach them from a neutral perspective and ask what is the best thing for Canada.

Again, coming back to this change, having been through the Annapolis Valley and in the vineyards in B.C., this is going to help, but not in a tremendous way though. That is why it is an appropriate place for a private member's bill. It is these types of industries on which we have to get a better handle.

To go back to the beginning of my 10 minutes here, I was talking about growing up in Nova Scotia. With the Acadians there was some tradition of growing wine, but it was not until we brought in experts from abroad that the wine industry in Nova Scotia began to take off, and it benefits all kinds of communities.

For example, in Nova Scotia now we have first nations involved in the wine industry. There is a very famous Okanagan vineyard Nk'Mip Cellars, which is growing by great leaps and bounds. This industry does show how often we look for traditional industries in order to supply economic growth and job development. However, sometimes it is the smaller kinds of industries that are on the edge that perhaps we have not thought of before, which would be areas of growth especially in areas that perhaps have had little economic development in the past.

The ability for personal transportation of wine across provincial borders is a good idea, but we may expand this as well. Again, maybe I can encourage my hon. colleague the next time he comes back with a private member's bill to talk perhaps about micro-breweries. In British Columbia there are very famous microbreweries.

Not to belabour the Nova Scotian connection, but when I was a teenager there I used to babysit young kids. They moved out to British Columbia and started a great local brewery called Phillips Brewing Company. When I first moved to B.C. as well, I used to drive a truck for Shaftebury Brewing Company. These are the kinds of small industries that make a special product that people really enjoy. These are boutique products, but there is no reason why people in other provinces should not be able to enjoy them and be able to transfer them across provincial borders worry free.

If we think where the Canadian wine industry was 20 years ago, it was nowhere near 6% of the total of our wine consumption. It has grown to 6%, but I would encourage the government to encourage clustering and investing in clusters in regions where this growth is prevalent and perhaps could be nurtured a bit.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise here today in the House to speak to this bill. I congratulate the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla for introducing this bill.

Like many other Canadians, before this bill was introduced, I did not realize that it was illegal to transport wine from one province to another. I guess that made a lot of us unknowing criminals. Maybe

those are the unknown crimes that the Minister of Public Safety was talking about when he introduced his legislation. I am not sure, but a lot of us have been guilty of transporting wine from province to province unknowingly.

I recently visited my son, who lives in Revelstoke, and of course at family gatherings we had a bit of wine from the Okanagan Valley. I can assure members that it is really good wine, although some very good wines are also being made in Ontario, Nova Scotia and in Quebec.

With all of the “grapes of wrath” happening here on the omnibus bill and the harm to our workers, it is a relief to take a moment to look at some of the other grapes, an important and growing market of our country, that we see in B.C., in Niagara and Prince Edward County in Ontario, in Quebec and more.

Recently I had the occasion to have dinner across the river in Gatineau, and as is usual I was brought a bottle of wine and asked to taste it. In this case, the waiter brought some imported wine from another country, and I told him I would like to drink a good Canadian wine if possible.

He only had one bottle of Canadian wine in stock, which is quite unfortunate, but the bottle of wine he had was from the Okanagan Valley. It was probably the best wine I have ever tasted. I said it was unfortunate that he only had one bottle in stock. It was fortunate for me, but it was unfortunate that the other people in the restaurant could not get to taste this wonderful wine. I hear my colleague from British Columbia supporting this great wine from British Columbia.

We in the NDP are going to support this legislation. We want to get it to the finance committee for proper study and amendments. On many levels I like this bill, which would relax restrictions on interprovincial wine purchasing for personal use.

I will read into the record the amendment that we want to add. This amendment has to do with making the wine with 100% Canadian grapes.

The amendment would add these words: “The importation of wine from a province where the wine is made with 100% Canadian grapes, by an individual if the individual brings the wine or causes it to be brought into another province in quantities, and as permitted by law of the latter province, for his or her personal consumption and not for resale or other commercial use.”

This amendment would help to promote Canadian wines. It would help the producers of Canadian wines. It may cause us to have to relabel the bottles of wine, but that is a small price to pay to promote the Canadian wine industry.

We would get good consumer choice. This would give Canadians a bigger choice in buying wines. Canadians would strongly benefit from a greater selection of wine, especially wineries from across Canada. There are many small wineries across this great country, and this would promote Canadian producers. We grow a lot of grapes in Canada, and this would certainly encourage wineries to maybe expand and create more employment. Nothing but good would come out of this bill.

Private Members' Business

• (1815)

For wine producers, a beneficial effect of the bill would be an expanded market for Canadian wineries. As I said, transporting more wine from one province to the next is certainly good for the wine industry.

Although we know we have very good wine in British Columbia, we also have some very good wines in Ontario, especially icewines, and one of the things that the bill would do is allow people from British Columbia to discover the great wines of Ontario. From Nova Scotia to British Columbia, the Canadian wine industry is emerging as internationally recognized cool-climate wine producers, garnering an impressive list of awards and praise from many of the world's most influential wine critics.

Just recently on Parliament Hill, we had some companies come out for a wine tasting evening. We tasted some of probably the best wines made in the world, wines that have won many awards. Some of these wines are known right around the world as being great wines.

On average, capital expenditures for industry have increased from about 12% annually. The softening of the law would allow for greater choice, while still preserving the provincial monopoly power for each liquor board. Of course, allowing liquor boards to bring more wines from outside their province would certainly help all wine producers right across the board.

Under current legislation, if an individual wishes to purchase wine that is available only in a province other than one in which he or she resides, the individual must make the purchase through a provincial or territorial liquor board, commission or corporation and must pay the associated taxes, markup rates and other special levies on alcohol. Again, as I said a while ago, most Canadians do not know that doing otherwise is against the law, so I am sure that this would help.

As it stands right now, the industry and the public consider that the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act, also called the IILA, administered by the Canada Revenue Agency, is the cause of the restricted trade. In reality, the combination of the IILA and provincial legislation makes this trade illegal. It is the provinces' legislation that makes it illegal, so we should work with the provinces to change this legislation and support Bill C-311. I am sure this would help everyone, not only the—

• (1820)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please.

Is the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla rising on a point of order?

Mr. Dan Albas: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It has been referred to many times tonight that this bill needs amendment. I would just like to remind all hon. members that at this point we have already passed report stage, we have already passed the finance committee review, and there have been no amendments from any of the NDP members or from any of the opposition members.

I would like to raise that point because we want to see debate at least come from information that we can all agree on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I appreciate the intervention from the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla. Indeed, there is the ability to pose amendments at third reading stage of a private member's bill. We have not heard any proposal formally, as such, and of course any amendments would have to be admissible in terms of the third stage of the bill.

Just for the clarification of the House, it is not exactly a point of order, but we appreciate the intervention and the clarification for other hon. members.

The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla letting us know about this. However, I want to make sure that he knows that we will be introducing some amendments, and those amendments are about making the wine with 100% Canadian grapes.

How can anybody oppose using 100% Canadian grapes? We cannot oppose that.

Hopefully, the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla is going to accept these amendments, maybe as friendly amendments, and we can put that in the bill. The only people we would be helping if we did that would be the people in the Canadian wine industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Newton—North Delta. I would remind the hon. member that I will have to interrupt her at the half hour point, as this would be the end of the time allocated for private members' business.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): I understand, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure today to rise in support of this legislation.

It is interesting how we learn so much. I moved to Canada in 1975. I have taken wine from one province into another without even knowing that I was not supposed to do that. Almost every member in the House whom I have talked to has said they have done the same thing. Every one of us needs to support this bill so that all of us can be made legal. For that reason alone, we need to support the bill.

This is just a hangover from the old Prohibition days. We have accepted that Prohibition is over. Alcohol is sold in every province. It is time to put an end to this archaic piece of legislation that is just sitting there, especially now that it does not serve a purpose and has actually become a barrier.

I am very impressed with the number of wineries right across Canada. When I went through the Niagara area, I saw wonderful wineries. I saw wineries in Quebec. I was even surprised to see wineries way out on the east coast.

B.C. has some of the best wineries anywhere, whether it is Burrowing Owl or Mission Hill. Now I am going to upset people, because I am not going to be able to mention all of them, but we have some amazing wines and wineries.

It just makes common sense that Canadians, as they travel across this beautiful country, should be able not only to imbibe the grape juice while they are visiting those wineries but should also be able to take a bottle or two back home with them for personal consumption.

Government Orders

Wines from some of these wineries—at least, some of my favourite ones—are often not very available in wine stores. They sell out long before it gets out there. Who would not want to buy a case of Mission Hill wine or Burrowing Owl wine, or some of the other wonderful wines we have around the country, and why would we want to stop Canadians from supporting Canadian businesses?

Most of us here understand economics. Economics involves encouraging people to buy Canadian. I have always felt that made common sense.

When people come here from other parts of the world, they are amazed by the quality of wine that Canada is producing. If that is so, then it makes common sense to make it available to Canadians. If colleagues of mine should happen to come to B.C. from Ontario and fall in love with one of the B.C. wines, we do not want to just hold them captive until they just drink themselves silly; we want them to taste the wine and enjoy it. We want them to be able to buy many bottles and take them back to Ontario to share with their friends. That would not only help to support the winery in B.C. but would also help to support Canadian wine all over, because a colleague will serve the wine to a diversity of people—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Is the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country rising on a point of order?

•(1825)

Mr. Ron Cannan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I just want to clarify something.

My hon. colleague from British Columbia and her colleagues spoke in favour of the bill. It is important for the industry for this legislation to be passed. If we stop debate now, we could have the vote tomorrow. Otherwise, it is going to take several months. It will drop to the bottom of the order of precedence. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The Chair does not usually serve the role of clarifying these types of things and it is not really a point of order, but the member does have it right. In fact, we are just actually finished debate on the first hour at third reading and report stage. There is an accommodation of two hours, so what will happen now is that I will read momentarily that this question will go to the bottom of the order of precedence and will make its way back up for the second hour of, again, the combination of report stage and third reading. At that point, the question will be put.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta will have four minutes remaining for her speech when the House next resumes debate on the question.

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

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1830)

[*Translation*]

CONTINUATION AND RESUMPTION OF RAIL SERVICE OPERATIONS LEGISLATION

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 12

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Trois-Rivières has six minutes remaining.

He has the floor now.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will try to pick up where I left off. I said that I would ask the government some questions and ponder some of the issues out loud.

The first issue is the government's faith in Canadians. I was talking about the right to strike. Do I have to point out that striking is a legal and democratic way to exert what I would call pressure on negotiations to formulate a collective agreement? Why not give the parties time to reach an agreement? The government should support negotiations, not tie the parties' hands by interfering with the natural balance of power that is so critical to true negotiation.

Time and the prospect of financial losses for both parties, whether due to a strike or a lockout, help to bring about a quick negotiated settlement. In this case, the government's tendency to almost systematically discredit the negotiation process strongly suggests that it intends to sideline the parties to the dispute.

This interference is an insult to those who, for months, have been working to find a fair and acceptable solution for everyone and to protect the working conditions of Canadian Pacific workers. The government seems to think that labour law is not up to the task. It is short-circuiting the usual dispute resolution process and imposing terms that it alone wants.

Furthermore, I have not heard anyone—either the CP workers or management—asking the government for immediate help to resolve this dispute. The government took it upon itself to interfere in the dispute. This seems to suggest that the government resolutely sides with one of the two parties in any dispute, rather than encouraging or helping the parties to reach a settlement.

Another question that transcends parliamentary procedure, but is basically at the heart of the problem, and one that we must ask the members opposite directly is this: what values does this government espouse? What interests and what development model does it want to impose on Canada?

I listened carefully to the reasons given by the hon. Minister of Labour for introducing this bill for the continuation and resumption of rail service. She said, and I quote, "We are fortunate in our country to have some of the best working conditions in the world."

Government Orders

I agree with her in part on this, but I would caution the minister and her government. These excellent working conditions did not come as a result of draconian and hasty interventions by the federal government in collective agreement negotiations. Rather, they are the result of numerous negotiations during which both parties agreed that it was important to regard quality of life at work and quality of life in society as essential to progress and prosperity.

Unfortunately, the government and its partisan policies are taking us on a downward spiral by bringing back the spectre of cheap labour and increasing job insecurity.

The excellent working conditions the minister referred to are also the fruit of co-operation between workers, employees and management in our country, with respect for everyone's rights and for the time it takes to reach an agreement.

I would like to emphasize this point. By forcing the debate, the Conservatives are attacking an essential aspect of the functioning of Canada's economy, that is, the trust that the stakeholders need to have in each other.

By hurriedly attempting to resolve a collective bargaining problem, the Conservatives are gradually destroying labour relations at a private company. The victory that the government anticipates by forcing a return to work is in fact a sword of Damocles that will certainly hang over many future negotiations. The government is, little by little, paving the way for the problems of tomorrow, rather than guaranteeing solutions for today.

But let us come back to the question. What is the Conservative government trying to tell us by moving this motion and introducing a bill that hurts Canadian Pacific employees? That it is concerned about Canada's productivity? That it wants to protect Canadian jobs and our economy? We all want these things, but not at the expense of Canadians' and workers' rights.

Economically advanced countries that only consider the productivity of their companies do so to the detriment of workers' conditions and quality of life.

● (1835)

In other words, not everything can be justified by economic considerations, especially not the actions of the government. My colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has already highlighted the paradox. Indeed, he said that the Conservative government—which argues all day long in the House and committees in favour of a hands-off approach by the state and non-interference in economic matters—is suddenly in a rush to legislate the moment a company takes its time resolving its internal problems and workers demand rights and make their voices heard.

In their economic theory, have the Conservatives forgotten that workers are an essential and fundamental cog in the economic machine? Why intervene in these negotiations and not when a private company relocates jobs or does not meet its obligations?

I will move on quickly to my conclusion, and I will try to explain why this government is making a twofold mistake by introducing this bill.

To begin with, the government is discrediting the work done by members. We are in this House to build a country, not to force workers to return to work when they are negotiating their working conditions, quality of life and future according to a set of well-known and accepted rules.

The government is making members of the House of Commons play the role of the bad guy. Unfortunately, this is not the first time this has happened.

As a result of this motion, the government will end up poisoning the social climate in Canadian companies. Will management negotiate in good faith in the future, knowing full well that each threat to strike will result in authoritarian interference by the federal government?

[*English*]

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, but here is my basic concern about the opposition. Those members do not have a national perspective. They have a very specific perspective in a very finite group of people whom they propose to represent.

CP Rail provides services all across this country. I know that NDP members are no fans of western Canada. We know that quite clearly. They have made that very clear in lots of things they have said. CP Rail provides extremely important services to many areas of western Canada, and when CP Rail is not running, we know we see a significant economic hardship in those areas. I am just wondering if the member might share some of his experience and expertise about how it will affect western Canada if we allow this work stoppage to continue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question.

Once again, we see the same approach. The basic problem is that the question is being asked in the wrong way. The Conservatives would have us believe that, if they do not intervene, the conflict will go on for ever. But it is quite the opposite.

When parties are left to negotiate without interference, the economic losses suffered both by the strikers and by management mean that the two parties look for a quick settlement that will lead to a win-win situation and will minimize each party's financial losses. But when one of the parties, the employer in this case, knows that the rules are fixed in advance, the debate is totally skewed.

● (1840)

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite mentioned our international image in her remarks.

I would like to ask the hon. member this: how do bills like this affect our image internationally? Basically, we are telling the companies of the world that they can come here and ride roughshod over the rights of our workers. Everything will go just fine because the government will support them as they do so. Then, when they cannot make a profit anymore, they will be able to close their doors and leave.

Government Orders

I am most concerned about the image that we are promoting overseas. I would really like to hear the hon. member's comments on that.

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made a great comment.

I obviously do not need to say that Canada's international image has been quite tarnished over the past few years in a number of areas.

Working conditions in Canada have dealt the latest blow to our credibility internationally. We are telling people that they can come and do business in Canada, that the government will be right behind them and that, on top of this, it will provide a cheap and docile labour force. Above all, we are telling them that workers' rights will be highly regulated and that the government will always be behind employers.

I think we are seeing a major shift in labour relations.

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member for Trois-Rivières.

It costs \$500 million a week for this strike to be carried on. We talk about workers. There are workers who are not gaining anything from this strike. Businesses all across our country will suffer and jobs will be lost. The minister in charge of this file has done yeoman's work trying to get a deal done through free bargaining.

How can the member square the fact that many people will be losing their jobs? Why does he not support this legislation and get people back to work? Could he please explain that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, as is the case all around, we are obviously always going to be very sensitive to workers losing their income because of disputes. But once again, the question is not well put.

If the minister had not interfered in the negotiations and said that there was going to be a bill anyway, the issue would have probably been settled, because the company would have had significant economic losses to consider.

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House and speak on behalf of working people across Canada.

Over the last few hours I have had to listen to debate where I have heard members from across the aisle saying that they are taking this action for Canadians. I want us to stop and reflect on that for a second. Working people in Canada are Canadians, except for the temporary foreign workers who come in right now. It is very hard to sit on this side of the House sometimes and listen to the diatribes that have occurred when people talk about Canadians in such a way that working-class people, whether they are professionals or they work in the service industry, it does not matter where they work as long as they are an employee working for someone else, are almost discounted by my colleagues across the way. If a worker should happen to have the audacity to belong to a union and, therefore, believe in collective bargaining, suddenly he or she is a bigger pariah.

I will take us back to the 19th century for a few seconds when the union movement came into existence. It came into existence because of the abuse of young children and workers by employers. Employers had all the power. People were dying on the job and terrible abuses were happening. Out of that industrial revolution, a kind of a balance emerged. It was the birth of the union movement where workers could get together as a collective and deal with their employer on a little more of a balanced playing field.

However, under the current government, the balanced playing field that has existed on and off for well over a century is being tipped in favour of the employer. I will explain why.

I have yet to see the government table legislation to help the workers in bargaining units, whether it was Air Canada, Canada Post or the Air Canada machinists and pilots. Air Canada pilots were legislated back even before they went out on strike. Now we have the CP teamsters. In every case, an employer is trying to take money out of the pockets of the workers and to dismantle their pensions. I know the government is very fond of attacking pensions, after all, it wants all Canadians to work until they are 67, whether they are able to or not. It has attacked the pensions itself. Therefore, why would I be surprised that the same group sides with employers who want to attack pensions?

Here we have an employer, CP, that makes substantial profits every year, millions and millions of dollars. Despite that, what is it asking their workers to do? It wants them to take a huge cut in their pensions. Do we not actually believe that people have earned these pensions and that they need to live a life of dignity? Should we not be bringing up every Canadian so that they have a pension and they can live a life of dignity? Instead, we have employers who are attacking workers' wages and pensions at the same time as they are making huge profits. I say that is such a shame.

Why would an employer like CP think there is any reason to negotiate? Even during the break week the minister made an announcement saying that when Parliament opens she planned to pass legislation. Can members guess what that does to bargaining? It brings it to a halt, especially on the part of employers who have no interest in negotiating because they have their friends holding a majority in this Parliament and they know they will get exactly what they want, which is another attack on working people.

● (1845)

I find it incredulous that people could sit in this room and say that the minister saying last week that she would be taking action did not have a chilling effect on negotiations. I think we need to accept that and the minister needs to take responsibility for prolonging the negotiations.

Government Orders

On this side of the House, we believe in full, free collective bargaining. I am getting so tired of my colleagues across the aisle talking about a free economy, the marketplace, letting things just go out and letting wages drop because, after all, they just facilitated bringing in, in a fast-tracked process, more foreign temporary workers who, they are saying, employers can pay 15% less. This is an abuse of those who come to work in this country. I believe that if they are good enough to work here they are also good enough to live here. Not only is it an abuse of those workers, but those kinds of policies actually lower the wages for other Canadians. Canadians are already struggling to make ends meet and now, with government intervention here and the changes to how we bring in people from overseas, especially the temporary foreign workers program, we are attacking Canadians from being able to make a liveable wage and to have decent security into their retirement years.

I am so proud of this collection of NDP members of Parliament who stand up for working people who are Canadians. We raise issues that are fundamental to a democracy, conventions that are recognized by the United Nations through the ILO and are recognized in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When we stand up to defend full, free collective bargaining rights, I am tired of hearing comments like, “the NDP are not friends of western Canada.”

I come from western Canada. I am from British Columbia and I am the best friend it has, along with the NDP, right now. It is this party that is speaking out for British Columbians and for building a stronger economy that benefits all and does not lead to our resources being shipped out of this country along with the jobs. We have experienced that in B.C. We watch truckloads of logs leave, the logs get manufactured into two-by-fours and then they come back. How much environmental sense does that make? How much economic sense does that make when good-paying jobs are taken out of Canada and moved overseas?

The argument that the NDP members are not friends of western Canada is just meant to detract from the real debate in this House, which is whether the Conservatives believe in free collective bargaining, and, obviously, by their actions, they do not.

I want the Conservatives to show me where they have intervened in a dispute and told employers that they were being unreasonable, that they should get back to the table and that it is not right for them to take away the salaries and pensions from employees. The Conservatives do not come out with statements like that. Instead they say that it is all being done to somehow save Canadians.

Right across the country, hundreds and thousands of workers are finding out how they are being saved. Their pensions are under attack and their wages are going down. The unemployment rate is high. As they are looking at all of this, they do not see much of a salvation in this. What they see is a government that is going out of its way to take punitive action against employees and putting a chill over the whole bargaining process.

● (1850)

This is not right. This is not good for Canada. It is earning us a bad name both internally and internationally. It certainly is not good for our future generation.

We are looking at attracting more people to come to Canada, and we keep hearing from the minister that we are going to need more immigrants, but they are going to look at this and choose other locations.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, I represent Oshawa. I have been listening to the ramblings of the NDP, and I actually think these speeches are very good for Canadians because they realize the truth in its leader's statement that he feels that jobs are diseases. In other words, we thought it was just western Canada, but now we have an attack on farmers and on my community of manufacturing. We need car parts to build cars; no parts, no cars, no paycheques, no stimulus to our economy.

The hypocrisy of the NDP members is that they say they are standing up for unions and union jobs. Well in my community, we are standing up for union jobs because my guys need to get to work tomorrow.

With these labour disruptions, they ask internationally how it is being felt. I can say right now that our supply chain in Canada, with these parts, is affecting American plants. We need to get these guys back to work.

We offered 120 extra days of the government's resources to help end this dispute. How long would the NDP allow this disruption to go on before it would intervene and help Canadians in my region of the country get back to work, because we need the jobs?

● (1855)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, we heard it again, talking about the CP workers who are out there saying that all they want to do is negotiate a settlement. I met with them at lunch. Once again, they are not considered Canadians.

Surely in Canada we do not start trampling on some people's rights just to speed things up. Any government that was committed to collective bargaining would allow the bargaining process to work out and it would put pressure on CP to sit down and actually negotiate instead of giving it a get-out-free card, which is what this legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Cape Breton—Canso, raised what I thought was a good issue. It is an issue that has been talked about a lot by the Conservative Party when it talks about back-to-work legislation.

Back in 1995, there was back-to-work legislation, but that legislation was quite different. It was legislation that was brought in by the Liberals but supported by the New Democratic Party, and Reformers I must say. It was a different approach in terms of labour relations.

I wonder if my colleague from Vancouver would comment and maybe explain the difference between the back-to-work legislation we collectively supported back in 1995 and the back-to-work legislation that is being proposed by the Conservative government.

Government Orders

Ms. Jinny Jøgindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, once again I will say that I and my colleagues believe in free collective bargaining. We absolutely believe that in order to find solutions we should get the two parties at the table and give them resources and support.

One thing I have found, and I have had personal experience with this, is that neither the employer nor the government will make any gains when they squeeze workers so hard that they lose the love and passion for the job they do. When workers are feeling used and abused, that their rights are under attack and they are not being treated equitably and fairly, that sucks the life out of them. That cost to society is greater in the long run.

When people go out to work, they do not just get out of bed and do their work. People get passionate about their work. They care about their work no matter what it is they do, and they give it 100%. However, if they are continually being hit on the head with a baseball bat, having their rights taken away by a government that is supporting the employer all the time as it attacks their pensions and salaries, then they will not be able to give 100%, and that is harmful for Canada.

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, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Whenever a government intervenes, it must prove that such intervention is both necessary and just. The labour minister's bill today proposes an intervention that must pass these same tests. Is it necessary? Is it just?

To consider the necessity test, let us consult history, geography and economics.

History tells us that British Columbia would not have joined Canada without the promise of a railway, and John A. Macdonald confirmed that the nation would not have survived its embryonic state without the tracks. Rail, he said, would “give us a great, an united, a rich, an improving, a developing Canada, instead of making us tributary to American laws, to American railways, to American bondage, to American tolls, to American freights...”. In 1885, Donald A. Smith pounded the last spike into a rail line that would climb over the Rocky Mountains, cut through the Prairies, link communities and unite Canada from sea to sea. We would not exist, quite simply, without the railway, and its necessity lives on to this day.

In the 127 years since the completion of that project, geography has made rail essential to our well-being. Some 5,500 kilometres separate Cape Spear, Newfoundland, from the Yukon-Alaska border, giving us the second largest country in the world and the eighth least-dense population on the planet. In such a country, freight moves roughly 70% of surface goods every single year, which brings us to economics.

If Canadian Pacific were one of many rail lines, we would not be having this conversation. Shippers would simply hire another rail line and continue about their business until the strike was done, but it is not just another rail line. It is one of only two class 1 railways. It has 24,000 kilometres of rail that link six provinces, all the way from

Port Metro Vancouver in the west to the Montreal port in the east. It handles 74% of potash, 57% of wheat, 53% of coal and 39% of container traffic. What would happen to all the workers who depend on potash, wheat, coal and container shipping if it were to sit idly during a strike? Factories, farms, mills and mines cannot reach their markets, grains pile up, workers down their tools, consumers pay more and wait longer, all at a cost of \$540 million per week to the Canadian economy.

Does this back-to-work bill pass the necessity test? Economics make Canadian Pacific necessary to rail service, geography makes rail service necessary to our well-being and history makes it necessary to our nation's very existence. Yes, it is necessary for the strike to end and for us to end it.

The second test for government intervention is whether it is just. I detest, with every fibre of my being, unnecessary and unjust state intervention. It is good, therefore, that back-to-work legislation is rare. Last year, there were 407 collective bargaining agreements reached across Canada in federal jurisdiction.

● (1900)

We legislated back-to-work laws twice. That is less than one-half of 1% of the cases, yet opponents of this bill will argue that a free enterprise government like ours should never intervene in a private sector bargaining dispute.

The government is already involved. Section 70.(1) of the Canadian Labour Code forces workers to pay union dues, even if they do not wish to be members of a union. The law forces money out of workers' pockets into union coffers. The union has the power to shut down a workplace, even for those workers who do not support the strike.

These legal powers give the union a state-enforced monopoly on labour in the rail sector. Unions want the law to grant them monopolistic powers without any laws to limit the damage that these powers can do to unwilling bystanders. The bystanders in this dispute are the workers who do not want to be on strike, the farmers trying to ship their goods, the consumers trying to buy them and every Canadian who must bear a part of the \$540 million a week cost of this strike.

Given these facts, it is necessary for Parliament to act, it is just for Parliament to act and act we will.

● (1905)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are aspects of my colleague's speech that I agree with.

What I do not agree with is the use of the power of the government to inhibit the collective bargaining process. We cannot deny that the hint of government intervention had a role in making the management of CP not bargain in good faith, because the government was going to do the work for it.

Government Orders

This is the issue. It is not a matter of whether it is the right time or the wrong time. It is wrong, I believe, for the government to send a message to management that it is going to step in, because then management basically says it does not have to do anything, because the government will do it. That is an attack on workers' rights.

These same workers are taxpayers, and they help drive the economy. If they do not make a decent salary, how do they pay in and how do they work for the economy? How do we resolve that issue?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member seems to suggest that the government should not get involved in these kinds of disputes, but I am telling him that according to section 70.(1), government and law are already involved.

The law forces workers at CP to be members of the Teamsters Union, even if they do not want to be. They have to pay in through union dues. So the government is already involved at that point.

That gives the union an enormous amount of power. When the union exercises that power to cost the economy \$540 million a week, to harm farmers, workers in manufacturing plants, workers in mines and the rest of the Canadian economy, it is the responsibility of the government to act to protect all of those innocent bystanders against union activities.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is there improvisation? The government appears to be improvising when it comes to labour relations.

One would expect labour policy would be rational and systematic and would say how we are going to approach strikes by major corporations in this country. We would have a schedule of major corporations whose employees were not allowed to strike, and there would be an alternative model of arbitration to deal with those situations.

Why do we not have a consistent approach, one way or the other, to labour relations in this country? Why are we improvising? Why is there ad hocery?

When I was taking an industrial relations course in university, the professor called this kind of behaviour permanent exceptionalism. Where is the systematic approach to labour relations in this country?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to suggest that we should be outlawing strikes at CP. I do not agree with that.

It is hard to follow the opposition parties logic. One of them says that everyone should be on strike all the time. The other one says that they should all be banned from striking. We are the sensible ones in the middle over here. We believe that in the vast majority of cases, collective bargaining agreements can be arrived at in a completely free and non-interventionist fashion. That is why 405 of them occurred last fiscal year, and we only intervened in two of them, less than one-half of one per cent.

Our approach is to minimize the intervention by government. However, in instances where the unions use the power that is vested in them by the fact that they force every member to be part of their organization to shut down big parts of the Canadian economy, it is our responsibility to step forward, protect jobs and protect the

livelihoods of millions of Canadians. That is what we are doing in this situation.

• (1910)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about the current work stoppage at Canadian Pacific Railway involving its engineers, conductors, real traffic controllers and others. I am very pleased to do this because I feel very passionately about the fragile economy happening in Canada and the first responsibility of the government to see that people have jobs, get back to work and cause the economy to continue to grow and flourish.

I would also like to take this opportunity to present to the House a potential solution to this conflict. Bill C-39 is that solution.

As members of the House know, CP Rail and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference have been actively negotiating since last fall. However, I am very sorry to say that during that time no progress has been made. As we all know, work stoppages in any of our key industries will negatively affect our economy, particularly while the world continues to struggle through the economic downturn. I think we can all agree that things are still shaky and that we are still recovering.

To be frank, no country's economy can afford a disruption in one of its primary industrial transport industries. This fact, together with the mandate Canadians have given us to protect our national interests in this period of economic uncertainty, makes the need for action clear.

We continue to encourage CP Rail and the TCRC to reach an agreement through the negotiation process. However, even with help from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the parties have been unable to resolve their differences. Therefore, we need to act now to stop this work stoppage. CP Rail is only one of two class I freight railways in Canada. It does significant business. According to Transport Canada, CP Rail moves almost \$50 billion in freight in Canada every year.

This work stoppage could have a deep impact and does have a deep impact.

In 2010, CP Rail handled the shipment of 74% of potash, which we just heard a few minutes ago from my hon. colleague, and many other kinds of minerals and products go via rail. On an annual basis, this represents \$5 billion worth of potash, over \$11 billion worth of grain and over \$5 billion worth of coal. That is a lot of industries.

While the economic impact of this work stoppage could be considerable, we must also consider the well-being of our citizens. For many Canadians, at first glance, rail transport is almost like an invisible industry, until people are sitting at a railway stop and watching freight cars up to 14,000 feet long go past the crossing. If they looked a little closer, what would they see as the train rolls by?

Government Orders

CP carries materials related to agriculture, manufacturing and heavy industry. This means a lot of trains are full of grain, coal, cars, trucks, steel, lumber, et cetera, and countless amounts of manufactured goods. Virtually everything in people's houses today likely moved on a train at some point. Think about it. It means products that make people's lives easier, more pleasant, more efficient and safer, even products that are necessary for food production.

However, rail freight is not only about products that make our lives easier.

CP Rail trains also carry the basic building blocks for products that are critical to the well-being of Canadians. For example, they carry potash, an ingredient used in fertilizers that allow us to feed our citizens and export food around the world. It is essential to agriculture because it improves, among other things, nutrient value, food texture and disease resistance of food crops. Fruits, vegetables, rice, wheat, sugar, corn, soybeans, even cotton all benefit from potash.

From that one example, everyone can see just how important it is that we resume the CP Rail services as soon as possible. We rely heavily on this mode of transport to keep the supply of goods moving across the country.

I would like to provide the House with some quotes taken directly from stakeholders that have written to the government, urging action to prevent a prolonged strike at CP Rail.

● (1915)

The Vancouver Board of Trade wrote to the Minister of Labour to say:

“Canadian Pacific is a critical supplier for many industries in British Columbia and, in many cases, there are no practical alternatives to maintain continuity in shipments to customers and suppliers. Even a short disruption in service will have significant impacts on business — directly on immediate sales commitments and very quickly thereafter on production...At this delicate state of our economic recovery, any service disruption stands to undermine the confidence placed by our interprovincial and international customers in doing business in this region”.

Spectra Energy has also voiced concerns over its natural gas operations being affected by a strike. It said, “CP Rail provides the critical rail services Spectra Energy requires at Empress, Regina and Winnipeg”. Winnipeg is where I come from and we have seen the train roll in every day until now. It went on to say:

“The rail strike has immediately eliminated Spectra Energy's capability to ship its product by rail at these terminals, and should the rail strike not be resolved in the very near future, Spectra Energy will be required to shut down its Empress plant. This has the potential to result in the loss of approximately 200 well-paying direct jobs linked to Spectra Energy's Empress, Regina and Winnipeg network”.

It is clear that the well being of our citizens associated with the work stoppage will impact Canadians all across the country. We cannot stand by, as a government, and watch, while the supplies that we need to create goods and sustain agriculture sit idle. Protecting

the well-being of Canadians is one of the government's most basic responsibilities, and it costs \$500 million a week for this strike. That is a lot of money going down the drain. I assure members that we take this responsibility very seriously.

Intervening in a labour strike is always a last resort. With CP Rail and two of its unions still at odds and with a strike currently taking place, we are left with few options. As I mentioned before, we have to consider Canadians. We also have to consider another key factor, the impact on the Canadian economy.

I do not need to remind members of the House that we continue to live in a climate of global economic uncertainty. We are proposing this legislation today to protect our still recovering economy.

I am not sure hon. members realize just what CP Rail means to Canada's economy. An October 2009 report by the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management estimated that four key Canadian bulk shipping industries, oilseed and grain farming, coal mining, wood products and manufacturing and pulp and paper and paper products manufacturing contributed over \$81 billion to the Canadian GDP each year.

Canadians are looking to the government to sustain and grow the economy. That is our principal mandate, and Canadians should expect nothing less.

We must take decisive action to resume rail services. I ask the members on all sides of the House for their support for the bill and for the good of the Canadian economy and Canadian families.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what my colleague was saying. She said “the well-being of Canadians” and “consider Canadians”. Does she not consider workers as Canadians? Does she not think workers should have a decent income on which to be able to raise their families?

I have an email from Brian Ferguson who actually works for the railroad. I do not know if the member knows how it is to work on the railroad, but he has been there for 26 years. He says:

The Company wants us to degrade our pensions to levels in place at CN. The 2 pension structures are totally different from each other. We pay higher premiums than our counterparts at CN and have for some time. Why should we now have to drop to their pension levels. We do not have time now to start putting extra funds away to make up the difference we would be losing if our pensions are reduced to levels the company wants.

When we look at this, they have been planning for retirement just as people with OAS have been planning for their retirement and you are willing to pull that off of them. Why are you doing that?

● (1920)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I remind hon. members to direct their questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Government Orders

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, the workers will be hurt. Everyone will be hurt if the economy slows down. If we do not have jobs, we do not have pensions. With the OAS, if we do not increase that for two more years, there will be no OAS.

That is why Canadians have elected this side of the House for their government because they are confident that the economy will stay stable. That is why I implore all sides of the House to please support this legislation.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I heard correctly the hon. member said at the beginning of her speech that railways should never be allowed to go on strike. If that is the case, will the government table legislation to communicate to Canadians that railways should never be allowed to go on strike because they are an important infrastructure in this country?

If I have it wrong, I would like to know under what conditions railways would be allowed to go on strike. If the economy were stronger, would they be allowed to go on strike? What would the threshold be? At what growth rate in the economy would railways be allowed to go on strike?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. We believe in free bargaining. We believe that if parties can come to the table, negotiate and do a deal, that is the best way of doing it. However, through mediation and conciliation, every possible avenue that has been taken to get this deal made did not work. That is when this legislation has to be put in place.

It is not a matter of saying the railways cannot go on strike. If free bargaining does not work, it is a matter of stopping the economy from coming to a standstill. The responsible thing is for our government to intervene and that is what we are doing tonight.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul and I understand that CP runs through her riding in Winnipeg. CP also runs through my riding in Medicine Hat.

In Medicine Hat, we have a huge agricultural component of the economy. Farmers are wanting to get their products to market. We also have a Methanex facility there, which produces methanol, which ships its product. We also have Canadian Fertilizers which ships its products. If this strike continues, there may be individuals whose positions may not be sustainable by those companies.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very insightful comments because he has figured it out. He has figured out that if a strike continues, the economy will stop. The workers, as the members opposite call them, would have no place to work. The workers would not have what they need to grow and prosper with their families in this country.

This is a last resort. Everyone believes in the free bargaining process. It is very hard to make the decision to say we have to intervene, but for the good of Canadians and of the country, that is exactly what we have to do. I implore all sides of the House to please support this legislation and get Canadians back to work.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member for Jonquière—Alma.

I will begin by saying that this is déjà vu. This is the same old same old. We have seen this before.

It is not surprising that the Conservative government is introducing a bill to force people back to work because this is what it has done since winning a majority. During the lockout ordered by Canada Post, no doubt with the Conservative government's encouragement, I remember making the following comment in the House: what have the working men and women of Canada done to this Conservative Prime Minister—we cannot name him, but I believe everybody knows who the Prime Minister of Canada is—to make him hate them so much?

Legislation has been passed to send people back to work or to force them into arbitration, but this Conservative government holds the record for saying in advance that, if a collective agreement is not ratified, it will pass back-to-work legislation in the event of a strike or lockout.

My colleagues have put it well: what employer will want to negotiate a collective agreement in good faith when it knows the government has a sledgehammer that it is ready to bring down on workers? The government has never brought the hammer down on employers, only on workers. And it is doing this on behalf of Canadians. What an insult! In Canada, the workers are Canadians.

The only argument we hear from the other side of the House is that we, the NDP, want to deal with the union officials. There is no shame in belonging to a union. It is a fundamental right under Canadian law. The Charter of Rights gives workers the right to belong to a union, but this government has never shown any respect for unions or for workers.

Shame, shame, shame. This government continues to abuse workers' rights, especially by announcing in advance that it will never permit national strikes or lockouts. And yet that is a fundamental right under the Charter of Rights. It is a fundamental right that has been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The government is the worst law-breaker in Canada. This is unprecedented in the history of Canada. The Conservative government we have before us today is the worst in this regard. It did it with Air Canada, it did it with Canada Post, and now it is doing it with Canadian Pacific. It says there are no other ways to do things.

The member from Manitoba said the train went through her region and people would no longer be able to ship things by rail. I have taken the train from Vancouver to Halifax. It is funny, because I was with CN and I went through Winnipeg. So there are other avenues.

If they are trying to make us believe it is the same in Medicine Hat, I am not sure of that. I will not question it because I would have to check. But I think CN goes through there. It apparently still goes through Winnipeg. And there are also other modes of transportation.

Government Orders

When the government says in advance that it is going to get involved in the negotiations and take the side of the companies and the big corporations, it is to be expected that the companies will not give their employees anything. They are even going to take things away from them.

The Conservative government says that it is doing this for the economy of our country. On the contrary, it is crucifying our country's economy in the long term. If working people lose their pension funds, and their wages are driven down, who is going to pay the price? The Canadian economy will pay the price.

This is not something that affects just the employers. The government is even attacking the programs working people have, like employment insurance.

● (1925)

They are talking now about 70% of earnings. So let us talk about that 70%. If someone cannot find a job after six weeks and is a frequent employment insurance claimant, they have to accept a job that pays 70% of their previous earnings. If they lose their job again, they will again have to reduce their earnings to 70%. And that will go on until they get down to the minimum wage. If they are thinking about imposing that on fish plant employees, they are mistaken: the 70% formula does not work, because fish plant workers are paid only minimum wage to start with. They are not going to be able to hurt them that way.

When it comes to employment insurance, the Conservative government is telling seasonal workers that if they are not able to find a job, it will find them one, it will grind them down and it will take away their employment insurance. I say that because this is an attack on working people, just like at Canadian Pacific, at Air Canada and at Canada Post.

The Conservatives say that they are doing this because they cannot accept the fact that foreign workers are able to work in Canada, while Canadians are being forced to look for work. They do not understand that when there is work in the fishery, for example, nobody is looking for work, because everyone is working. It is when the fishing is over that these people are out of a job.

The government says that Canadians should go west. The member for Madawaska—Restigouche, who is the Minister of State responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, says that people from our part of the country prefer to go hunting and receive employment insurance benefits than work. Residents of Madawaska—Restigouche who have spoken to me recently say that they are now ashamed of their member. Rather than standing up for New Brunswick, the member insults his fellow citizens each time he opens his mouth.

The member for Madawaska—Restigouche should remember what happened in the late 1980s, when he made cuts to employment insurance when he was Minister of Employment and Immigration under Brian Mulroney. Canadians booted him out. There were two Conservatives left in power: Jean Charest and Elsie Wayne from Saint John. They were the only two that were left. Remember what happened to the Liberals when they made cuts to employment insurance in 1996: in 1997, they completely lost Atlantic Canada. It is important to remember what happened. Unless we close the

fisheries, people from Atlantic Canada will go and work in the west, and foreigners will come and work in our region.

That is the trick that the government has devised. Foreign workers will come and work in the plants because Atlantic Canadians will have headed west. Then the foreign workers will go home and will not get employment insurance. They will not receive benefits. The Conservatives have got things all worked out. Back home, we call that a quiet deportation. In 1755, the Acadians were deported and scattered far and wide both in Louisiana and elsewhere. This is a new way of deporting Acadians, of sending them elsewhere rather than coming up with a proper response and engaging in economic development in our regions.

Rather than doing that, the government is attacking workers. It is shameful. The major centres think that they are the only ones and that the world revolves around them. They do not recognize our country's rural regions. It is a lack of respect. Even debate is limited in the House of Commons. What a great attitude the Conservatives have: they do not even believe in democracy. Their way of doing things is to rush to make us vote at 2 a.m. because they want to get rid of a bill rather than debate it. They are not even prepared to do that.

They have imposed gag orders on over 20 bills. Their undemocratic measures are at an all-time high. This has never been seen before in Canada. It has become embarrassing to be Canadian and to live in our country. It is shameful. It hurts me to say these things because I love my country, but the Conservatives are destroying it. They are destroying our democratic country and the pride we have or had.

● (1930)

I think that the Conservative government will learn its lesson in three years, in 2015. It is coming. If the Conservatives looked at the polls and listened to what people are saying, they would see that they are not upholding Canadian values.

We have the ability to help each other. We should respect workers. The Conservatives are not respecting workers when they allow companies to cut pensions and decrease wages. These workers are Canadians just like the rest of us.

[English]

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the previous speaker's comments and to his colleague from Newton—North Delta before that. I have had different people in my riding ask me from time to time, after listening to the craziness that happens in the House and some of the bizarre comments, why I listen to that and what keeps me around. I jokingly say sometimes that I just want to see what the heck is going to happen next, because we have just about heard everything on this.

I was talking to some colleagues of mine in agriculture in Saskatchewan and Manitoba on the weekend. Their big fear in Alberta and parts of Saskatchewan is that their seeding is not done, and with CP shut down, there is absolutely no other recourse to get their potash and fertilizer to them. It is as simple as that. They cannot just put it on trucks. The sheer volume does not work.

Therefore, I want to ask the member what he has to say about that. Does rural Canada not matter? Does our food source not matter?

Government Orders

As well, the member seems to think it is a God-given right to have a job. I would have to agree with that; it is great to have a job. However, at the same time, they turn around and kick the daylighters out of the people who supply those jobs.

• (1935)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer my colleague with a question. The thing is, what do we do with the rights of the workers? Do they have the right to strike? In this case, they are not on strike. It is a lockout. The company knows that the government will support it and that the government will legislate them back to work. Do they not see it at all?

My people at home ask me if I am not tired of listening to the craziness of what the Conservatives are doing every day to Canadians. That is what they ask me. They ask me if I am not tired of seeing the way they are treating Canadians and cutting employment insurance, which is an insurance that belongs to them. The government stole over \$57 billion to put—

An hon. member: The Liberals did it.

Mr. Yvon Godin: He is saying that the Liberals did it, but who put the bill forward to legalize the stealing of the money? It was the Conservative Party when it came with a new agency and said it would take \$2 billion and put it into it forget about the rest. It was the Conservative Party that legalized the stealing, hand in hand with the Liberals.

At the beginning of my speech, I said the member for Madawaska—Restigouche was the one who was cutting with Brian Mulroney at the end of 1989. Let us remember what happened to the Conservative Party. There were two left at the end when Canadians were finished with them. They were sick and tired of listening to them. That is what happens.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard from the other side with regard to the legislation that has been presented in this particular case. As we know, this is the fifth time that we have seen back-to-work legislation come from the government. Certainly in past cases, when we look at Canada Post, we saw legislation that came forward that was very restrictive and prescriptive. It really tied an arbitrator's hands. It really tilted the scales toward the company in that particular case. The Air Canada back-to-work legislation was a very similar case.

The minister is trying to shine her halo here by saying that this is a less egregious piece of legislation because the Conservatives have left a lot to the arbitrator. What the Conservatives fail to understand is that it is the actions of the past that have really set the dial. Last week she triggered the fact that she would be coming with back-to-work legislation. That tilted the whole issue toward the company and put the workers at a disadvantage.

I would like my colleague's comments on that.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, it is exactly as I said in my speech. If the minister keeps saying in advance that the government will legislate people back to work because of the economy, that is what will happen.

Imagine what the Conservatives have done in the previous bill they put forward. It was not enough that Canada Post had given an

increase of 2%. The Conservatives turned around and put in a decrease through the bill, making it a 1.5% increase. I bet Canadian Pacific thinks it will get that too. It is not enough that it was bringing the pension down by 15%; it probably thinks it could get a 30% decrease.

That is what the government has created with its mentality of hating the working people of our country.

The Speaker: I will have to stop the hon. member there, as his time has expired.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Jonquière—Alma.

• (1940)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I would like to say that workers have the right to organize, to choose their union and to negotiate. No contract, no work.

The employer also has rights. It has the right to manage its plants, to manage discipline, to manage labour, to organize the work, to negotiate collective agreements and to lock out workers. As we have seen here in the House, the employer has another right, and that is to call on the government to force workers back to work, despite their collective agreement. That is a new right, according to what we have seen in the House since 2011.

Regardless the colour of their party, every elected member of the Government of Canada has to listen to the men and women they represent. Unfortunately, since May 2011, I get the impression that the opposite is happening here, and I sense the contempt for workers.

I am a union worker. I feel the contempt; I feel it in my bones. That is what I am feeling in this House: contempt for workers. Yet they are the ones who keep the government working. They are the ones who contribute, who pay our salaries so that we can make decisions. They are entitled to keep the rights they have today, the rights our parents fought for.

Once again, we are presented with special back-to-work legislation. What a surprise. Were the Conservatives elected by large corporations or by Canadians? Do they think that Canadians gave them a mandate to scare labour organizations? I doubt it.

After what the Conservatives did to the employees of Canada Post, Aveos and Air Canada, now they are getting ready to stick it to the Canadian Pacific employees. The message they are sending to employers is crystal clear: if you have problems with your union, do not negotiate; we will introduce special legislation to force the employees back to work. The continuation and resumption of rail service operations legislation is unhealthy and irresponsible. Do you have any idea of where that will leave us at the end of the day?

What a great way to ruin democracy and humiliate those who want to stand up for their rights. The Conservatives want to make employees more dependent on their employers and to make secure jobs insecure, but at what cost? Let me remind you that we are talking about people who are free, free to choose, free to have the lives they want and free to say yes or no. It is a right people have here in Canada because they fought to have rights.

Government Orders

There is an imbalance of power because of a party that is systematically threatening the gains that unions have won in the past. The vast majority of Canadian workers, unionized or not, enjoy the rights for which workers have fought. No matter what the government says, it has to protect those legitimate rights that are essential to labour peace.

Sometimes, it seems that the government says one thing to voters and then does the opposite. At least that is what we are seeing from the other side of the House. I do not believe for a second that the government is impartial in its decisions. I do not feel that its actions are for the common good. How can it prove me wrong? The corporate tax giveaways give us a very good idea of how they see the common good.

I do not want to say that the Conservatives are acting in bad faith, but right now, their party is showing an intolerable contempt for Canada's low income earners. Their party is insulting the intelligence of those who understand their little game. In addition, the Conservative Party is denigrating unions, which are the source of almost all social movements in Canada. There is nothing to be proud of.

Do you see what is happening in Quebec at the moment? Ask your Quebec colleagues what has caused this crisis and its consequences. Do you not feel things sliding out of control? Always taking the same side is a huge risk. How much is peace worth in financial terms? I ask the question because telling the truth is important. Knowing the consequences, are my Conservative colleagues really going to keep putting social peace at risk in Canada?

Earlier, I heard some hon. members opposite say that the NDP was made up of people who are against everything. The Conservatives say that we are in the workers' camp and that it is too expensive when the country has to be saved. In my riding, factories have been shut down, jobs have been lost, workers have been locked out and plants have been moved to the United States. The cost to the community is in the millions of dollars. No one on the other side of the House has said a word. So the Conservatives have nothing to teach us about standing up for Canadian workers. This is bullshit, and that is putting it politely.

I must certainly take a moment to congratulate the workers at Canadian Pacific. Despite everything, they have maintained rail service to Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver so that Canadians are not the victims of this labour dispute.

• (1945)

Nobody is surprised when the government tries to stir up panic by saying there is an urgent need to restore services, but nobody believes it either. We must condemn this abusive behaviour. Let us not allow this government to destroy social peace.

Surely we all know the story of the boy who cried wolf. I certainly do not need to remind anyone of that. This will end very badly in 2015.

If the government is in such a rush to intervene in workers' lives, let it start by creating good jobs and good working conditions for workers. The job market is collapsing, new jobs are mediocre more

often than not, and Canadians' standard of living is declining before our eyes. Those should be our priorities.

As I have said before, people have the right to be represented, to organize in unions, and employers have rights too. What I have seen in this House since May 2011, with Air Canada, Aveos and so on, it is that the government intervenes when it suits them. It does not intervene when there are job losses, or when plants relocate, even when it could have had something to say about that. Some of our dams and rivers belong to foreign capital interests. That is unacceptable.

The government's "we know best" attitude is insulting. It is insulting because we come from the union community and we are workers. The government should not spit on the workers. We are here this evening because it is the workers who pay our salaries.

[English]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am really disappointed in that member in terms of his unparliamentary language here in the House of Commons. I think he owes all parliamentarians an apology and should withdraw those remarks.

Second, I would like to point out that CP Rail is a vital link to the west coast for produce and products leaving Canada and coming into Canada. With this strike there is a huge potential to damage Canada's international reputation as a reliable supplier.

I know that the member is being pulled by the strings of his union bosses. My question to him is this: do the union bosses who are pulling his strings want to bring the Canadian economy to the same level as we see in Greece?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Patry: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do not need to withdraw my remarks because I insulted no one. I come from the labour community. I have my language. I have my ways of thinking and speaking. I insulted no one. I named no one in this House.

I talked about the Conservative government, which is thumbing its nose at us, belittling us, regarding us with contempt. And I should apologize to them? I said nothing wrong. I gave my opinion. I was elected to represent the workers and to give my opinion. That is how it works, and I will not withdraw my remarks. If my colleague is unhappy, he should come and see me.

[English]

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would appreciate it if you would have the blues checked and ask the member to repeal his comments and apologize to parliamentarians for his use of that type of language here in the House of Commons.

The Speaker: I have to say to the hon. member for Medicine Hat that I did not catch what was said in terms of the complaint, but I would be happy to check the blues and get back to the House as to whether or not the member should withdraw the remarks.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Government Orders

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of economies are going into default, and my colleague from the Conservative Party happened to mention Greece. I would like to point out that it is not just Greece; it is also Spain, Portugal, Italy and Ireland.

I know there is passion when we are talking about the workers and the Teamsters, but there are only two teamsters in this. I and my colleague from, I believe, Vancouver could probably start a union.

My question to my hon. colleague is this: does he not feel overwhelmed that the Conservative government, one year after the election when it got a very large majority, is able to do whatever it wants?

I would also like to point out that the Conservatives would not have gotten a majority if it was not for the NDP taking the Liberals down in 2005.

• (1950)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it was the NDP that took the government down; it was Canadians who did that.

Mr. Claude Patry: Mr. Speaker, to answer the question, when I arrived in this House in 2011, I was retired. I am a factory worker and a former union president. I am not a puppet. I have a lifetime of experience behind me. I worked in factories for 35 years. I know how it goes.

I came here to work, regardless of party. I often say that in the House. I try to work with people to make progress for Canadians. That is what I want. Yes, I am disappointed because I expected we would be doing more for Canadians. That was my goal in this House. I can work with anyone in this House, if we are making progress for the country and our people. That is what I have in my mind. For the moment, yes, I am disappointed, because I have felt disrespected since 2011.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last thing that would occur to me would be to accuse my hon. colleague of beating around the bush.

In view of the disputes at Canada Post and Air Canada, and now at CP, has my colleague seen anything in his riding, which is particularly affected, to indicate that bargaining between employers and employees is changing?

Mr. Claude Patry: Mr. Speaker, we have a major dispute, a lockout, in Alma. We are seeing organizational changes being made. There is a lot of talk about pensions. That is being talked about here. The people and the unions are worried. They see what is happening in the paper and aluminum industries. They see that public and private pension funds are short of money. Yes, everyone is worried.

[*English*]

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill C-39, the restoring rail service act.

Let me come right to the point. Our government has decided that it is necessary to bring in legislation to end the work stoppage at CP Rail. I am speaking of the work stoppage resulting from the outside

disputes between the Canadian Pacific Railway, CP Rail, and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, the TCRC.

The TCRC represents 4,200 running trades employees at CP. The running trades include locomotive engineers, conductors, baggage-men, brakemen, car retarder operators, yardmen, switch tenders and locomotive firemen. It also represents 220 rail traffic controllers.

I would like to talk a little about the history of the dispute at CP Rail. As members know, the collective agreements for these two groups expired on December 31 of last year. Negotiations for a new collective agreement for both units began in October 2011. In March of this year, the labour program appointed conciliation officers to help the parties conclude an agreement. However, sadly in my view, these efforts were unsuccessful.

On May 1 of this year, the parties were released from conciliation. On May 16, the Minister of Labour offered the parties extended mediation to help them reach agreements, or at least move forward on some of the remaining issues from the bargaining table that included pensions, wages, benefits and working conditions. However, sadly, this offer was declined.

On May 22, the Minister of Labour again met with the parties. While she was able to get the parties to agree to maintain commuter rail services, the parties were unable to reach an overall collective agreement. On May 23 of this year, the strike began. That brings us to the unfortunate situation we are faced with here tonight in this House. The strike has caused a complete shutdown of CP Rail due to the lack of personnel trained and certified to work as conductors, engineers and rail traffic controllers. The legislation we are proposing would resume services at CP Rail.

What are reasons for this legislation? We understand that labour dispute legislation is rarely popular. Canadians are rightfully concerned about preserving the right to strike or lockout. Of course we have heard a great deal about that from our friends on the other side of the House. We do not come to this legislation easily. We regard it as a last resort, but certainly a necessary last resort for reasons that I am going to briefly outline.

Our government has compelling reasons for intervening in this particular case. Most important of these reasons is that a continued work stoppage at CP Rail will seriously and possibly irreparably damage the Canadian economy.

We have used this argument before to justify pre-emptive, back-to-work legislation, but the danger was real then and the danger is real today. Our recovering economy is still fragile and it cannot afford a sustained work stoppage in a major transportation mode.

I am not exaggerating when I say that CP Rail is a major transportation mode. Let me give this House an idea of some of its operations. We can think of CP Rail as a ribbon of steel that extends from the Port of Metro Vancouver to the Port of Montreal, with connections to the U.S. industrial centres of Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, Washington, New York City and Buffalo. We are talking about a 22,000 kilometre railway network.

Government Orders

CP Rail operates in British Columbia, my home province of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, as well as in 13 American states. Through agreements with other carriers, CP Rail extends its market reach east of Montreal into the Maritimes, and south throughout the U.S. and all the way into Mexico.

According to Transport Canada, in 2010, CP Rail handled the shipment of 74% of Canada's potash, 57% of Canada's wheat and 53% of Canada's coal. Let me put this in dollar figures. Every year CP Rail moves \$5 billion worth of potash, \$11.1 billion worth of grain and \$5.25 billion worth of coal. The total value of freight moved in Canada by CP Rail every year is \$50 billion.

These numbers are so large that they are difficult to comprehend, but I think Canadians can understand that when the movement of commodities like wheat, coal and potash is interrupted, reverberations are felt throughout the entire economy.

● (1955)

The Minister of Labour has met with some key stakeholders, including CN Rail, VIA Rail, Port of Metro Vancouver, TSI Terminal Systems Inc., Potash Corporation Inc. and Teck Resources, which is a coal company. When she asked them how they would be affected by a CP Rail work stoppage, they confirmed it would be devastating to their businesses.

The different transportation modes in this country are all linked to each other and function best as part of an integrated whole. The rail-based logistics system is complex and involves a range of associated operations, including terminal operators, transloaders, ports, shipping lines and trucking firms. When even one of these operations shuts down, the problem can cause congestion and delays that affect all of the other modes of transportation. That is what we are currently faced with.

Many Canadian enterprises depend on efficient and reliable rail services. The sectors that use rail transport contribute significantly to the Canadian economy. The four key industries that use bulk shipping are oilseed and grain farming, coal mining, wood products manufacturing, and pulp and paper. These industries add more than \$81 billion to Canada's GDP annually and account for close to one million jobs.

It is not an over-exaggeration that a work stoppage at CP Rail is particularly bad news for the forest industry, which is still struggling to recover from the economic downturn. It is a hard blow to the automotive industry because imported auto parts travel by rail. It is also a serious hardship for Canadian wheat producers. Work stoppages in the rail industry are very disruptive to the flow of products like these. It often takes several weeks for operations to recover after disruptions.

CP Rail is also a vital link in moving freight to and from Canada's west coast ports, which are an integral part of the Asia-Pacific gateway. The work stoppage is preventing our ability to keep products moving between Canada and Asia and threatens Canada's reputation as a reliable place to do business. There are no good alternatives to rail.

Now that CP Rail is sidelined, are there other rail companies that are able to take over? The answer is no. The ability of CN Rail to handle additional freight is quite limited. For example, for a

commodity like grain, CN estimates it can pick up less 10% of CP Rail's capacity. VIA Rail could not mitigate the damage caused by this work stoppage because it is a passenger rail service that is not equipped for freight. Rail is a relatively cheap and efficient way to move bulky products. In fact, most commodities that are currently moved by rail cannot be transported by alternative means, such as truck or barge. Even when there are alternative carriers, the cost and requirements of switching may be restrictive.

This work stoppage could not only lead to shutdowns and layoffs in many industries, but the added costs of transportation would be passed on through the supply chain to the Canadian consumer, leading to higher retail costs for many of the goods that I have just outlined. Just to give one rather obvious example, a prolonged work stoppage at CP Rail could affect every Canadian simply by raising the price of bread.

The government does not use this type of legislation without careful deliberation. Our government's use of legislation to end labour disputes in the rail industry is not unprecedented. In fact, the Government of Canada has taken this step eight times since 1950, which would show the importance of rail movement to Canadians.

The last time there was back-to-work legislation involving CP Rail was in 1995 when minister of labour Lucienne Robillard introduced Bill C-77, the Maintenance of Railway Operations Act. The act ordered a resumption of operations at CN, CP and VIA Rail and the establishment of mediation-arbitration commissions for each of the bargaining units.

The Canada Labour Code specifically recognizes that free collective bargaining is the basis for sound industrial relations. When collective bargaining fails, the code gives the parties the right to strike and lockout. Government intervention is used only in situations where the public interest or the national economy is threatened. That is the case here.

As we know, in March 2012, the government brought in an act to provide for the continuation and resumption of air service operations to prevent work stoppages at Air Canada by the Air Canada Pilots Association and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. We did that to protect the public interest. The government will continue to use its legislative powers to protect Canadians from strikes and lockouts that could paralyze Canadian infrastructure.

Labour stability in the railway transportation sector is critical to the functioning of the Canadian economy and to our continued recovery. Therefore, in a country as large as Canada with such vast distances over which products must be moved, it is imperative that the rail lines continue to operate. For those reasons, I urge all hon. members to support the quick passage of Bill C-39.

Government Orders

● (2000)

The Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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 Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (2045)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 230)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Bloch	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Gallipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder

James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliver
Opitz	Paradis
Payne	Penashue
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Williamson	Young (Oakville)
Yelich	Zimmer— 162
Young (Vancouver South)	

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Foote
Freeman
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé

Government Orders

Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)	Plamondon	Quach
Hassainia	Hsu	Rae	Rafferty
Hughes	Hyer	Ravignat	Raynault
Jacob	Julian	Regan	Rousseau
Karygiannis	Kellway	Saganash	Sandhu
Lamoureux	Lapointe	Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Larose	Latendresse	Scott	Sellah
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie	sor)	
Liu	Mai	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Marston	Martin	St-Denis	Stewart
Masse	Mathysen	Stoffer	Sullivan
May	McCallum	Thibeault	Toone
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Tremblay	Trudeau
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Turnel	Valerioté— 140
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)		
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)		
Mulcair	Murray		
Nantel	Nash	Nil	
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo		
Pacetti	Papillon	The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.	
Patry	Péclet		
Perreault	Pilon		

PAIRED

[For continuation of proceedings see part B]

CONTENTS

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Government Response to Petitions			
Mr. Lukiwski	8441	Mr. Bevington	8446
Committees of the House		Mr. Lamoureux	8446
Government Operations and Estimates		Ms. Péclet	8447
Mr. Martin	8441	Mr. Daniel	8447
Committees of the House		Mr. Cotler	8447
Fisheries and Oceans		Motion agreed to	8449
Mr. Van Loan	8441	POOLED REGISTERED PENSION PLANS ACT	
Motion	8441	Mr. Menzies (for the Minister of Finance)	8449
(Motion agreed to)	8441	Bill C-25. Third reading	8449
Petitions		Mr. Wallace	8449
Mining Industry		Ms. Péclet	8452
Mr. Martin	8441	Mr. Casey	8452
The Environment		Mr. Menzies	8452
Mr. Tilson	8442	Mr. Blanchette	8452
Rights of the Unborn		Ms. Mathysen	8453
Mr. Hsu	8442	Mr. Poilievre	8455
Citizenship and Immigration		Ms. Sgro	8456
Mr. Hsu	8442	Mrs. Day	8456
Environmental Sensitivities		Ms. Mathysen	8456
Ms. Freeman	8442	Mr. Rousseau	8456
Suicide Prevention		Mr. Blanchette	8456
Mr. Mayes	8442	Ms. Sgro	8457
Search and Rescue		Ms. May	8459
Ms. Foote	8442	Mr. Sweet	8460
Pensions		Ms. Charlton	8460
Ms. Mathysen	8442	Mr. Lamoureux	8460
Poverty		Mr. Kenney	8461
Mrs. Grewal	8443	Mr. Miller	8461
Housing		Mr. Casey	8462
Ms. Boutin-Sweet	8443	Ms. Péclet	8462
41st General Election		Mr. Butt	8463
Ms. May	8443	Mr. Menegakis	8463
Human Rights		Motion	8464
Ms. May	8443	Ms. Freeman	8464
Questions on the Order Paper		Mr. Lamoureux	8464
Mr. Lukiwski	8443	Mrs. Day	8465
GOVERNMENT ORDERS		Mr. Lamoureux	8466
Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act		Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	8466
Bill C-31—Time allocation motion		Mr. Carrie	8466
Mr. Van Loan	8443	Ms. Ashton	8467
Motion	8443	Mr. Dubé	8468
Mr. Cullen	8443	Mr. Menzies	8468
Mr. Kenney	8444	Mr. Lamoureux	8468
Ms. Charlton	8444	STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
Ms. May	8445	Recreational Boating Industry	
Mr. Blanchette	8445	Mr. Wallace	8469
Ms. Foote	8445	Aboriginal Affairs	
Ms. James	8445	Mr. Saganash	8469
		Volunteerism	
		Mr. Brown (Barrie)	8469

Mr. Goodale	8479
Mr. Flaherty	8479
Infrastructure	
Ms. Chow	8479
Mr. Lebel	8480
Mr. Lebel	8480
Ms. Chow	8480
Mr. Lebel	8480
Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Opitz	8480
Mr. Opitz	8480
Mr. MacKay	8480
Public Safety	
Ms. Sgro	8480
Mr. Toews	8480
Poverty	
Ms. Crowder	8481
Ms. Finley	8481
International Trade	
Mr. Holder	8481
Mr. Fast	8481
Disaster Assistance	
Mr. Rafferty	8481
Mr. Toews	8481
Employment Insurance	
Mr. Fortin	8481
Ms. Finley	8481
Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker	8482
Points of Order	
Oral Questions	
Mr. MacKay	8482
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	8482
Mr. Rae	8482

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Continuation and Resumption of Rail Service Operations Legislation

Motion that debate be not further adjourned

Mr. Van Loan	8482
Motion	8482
Mr. Cullen	8482
Ms. Raitt	8483
Mr. Lamoureux	8483
Ms. Sims	8483
Mr. Cuzner	8483
Mr. Aubin	8483
Mr. Wallace	8484
Mrs. Groguhé	8484
Mrs. Glover	8484
Mr. Gravelle	8484
Mrs. Sellah	8485
Mr. Karygiannis	8485
Mr. Carmichael	8485

Mr. Rousseau	8485
Mr. Bellavance	8486
Mr. Aubin	8486
Mr. Hyer	8486
Mr. Patry	8486
Motion agreed to	8488
Government Business No. 12	
Motion	8488
Mr. Cullen	8488
Ms. Leitch	8488
Mr. Cuzner	8488
Mr. Godin	8488
Mr. Kellway	8489
Mr. Mulcair	8489
Mr. Cuzner	8492
Mr. Poilievre	8492
Mr. Boulerice	8492
Mr. Wallace	8493
Mr. Chisholm	8493
Mr. Ritz	8493
Mr. Cullen	8494
Mr. Valeriotte	8495
Mr. Carrie	8495
Ms. Adams	8495
Mr. Aubin	8497
Mr. Cuzner	8497
Mr. Zimmer	8497
Mr. Aubin	8498

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act

Bill C-311, Report Stage	8498
Mr. Albas	8498
Motion for concurrence	8498
(Motion agreed to)	8498
Bill C-311, Third reading	8498
Mr. Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	8499
Mr. Trudeau	8500
Mr. Kramp	8500
Mr. Atamanenko	8500
Mr. Trudeau	8501
Mr. Donnelly	8502
Mr. Stewart	8503
Mr. Gravelle	8504
Ms. Sims	8505

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Continuation and Resumption of Rail Service Operations Legislation

Government Business No. 12

Motion	8506
Mr. Aubin	8506
Mr. Butt	8507
Ms. Borg	8507
Mrs. Smith	8508
Ms. Sims	8508
Mr. Carrie	8509

Mr. Lamoureux.....	8509	Mr. Miller.....	8514
Mr. Poilievre.....	8510	Mr. Cuzner.....	8515
Mr. Benskin.....	8510	Mr. Patry.....	8515
Mr. Scarpaleggia.....	8511	Mr. Payne.....	8516
Mrs. Smith.....	8511	Mr. Karygiannis.....	8517
Mrs. Hughes.....	8512	Mr. Aubin.....	8517
Mr. Scarpaleggia.....	8513	Mr. Rathgeber.....	8517
Mr. Payne.....	8513	Motion agreed to.....	8520
Mr. Godin.....	8513		

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:

Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

En cas de non-livraison,

retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and
Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the
following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les
Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à
l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 146 • NUMBER 129 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, May 29, 2012
(Part B)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (2045)

[English]

RESTORING RAIL SERVICE ACT

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC) moved that Bill C-39, An Act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations, be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

She said: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Order, please. We will start the debate now, and if members wish to carry on conversations I would invite them to do so on either side of the chamber in one of the lobbies.

The hon. Minister of Labour has the floor.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, it was just north of here, in Bonfield Township, where the first spike was driven into our national rail system back in 1880. In the 132 years since, this transcontinental link has become a defining feature of our nation. Indeed, our country's history is linked to our railway system. From the shores of the St. Lawrence River, across the endless expanse of the Canadian Shield and the Prairies, through the majestic Rockies and over the rugged terrain of British Columbia, it has been the ribbon of steel that binds our country together.

Our government understands the historic connection that so many Canadians have to our rail service, but it is not just part of Canadian heritage. Much more than historical significance, Canada's rail system continues to be an integral part of our country's economic, trade and transportation needs.

The Speaker: Order, please. I hate to interrupt the hon. minister once again, but it is very difficult for the Chair to hear what she is saying, and some members are having similar difficulties. Members who wish to remain in the chamber could keep their conversations until later, or, if they feel the need to converse with their colleagues, they can do so in either of the lobbies conveniently located on either side of the chamber.

The hon. Minister of Labour has the floor.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, Canadians may not even realize just how great the railways impact on the economy. I want members to consider these facts. Canada has the third largest rail network in the world and it handles the fourth largest volume of goods in the

world. Two-thirds of Canada's rail traffic moves transborder and overseas trade. In fact, 40% of Canada's exports rely on rail transportation. With no trains running, the implications of this strike are widespread.

Let us take a look at Canadian Pacific Railways book of business.

Transport Canada reported that in 2010 CP Rail handled 74% of all potash, 57% of all wheat, 53% of all coal and 39% of all containers within Canada. In terms of revenue on an annual basis, this represents \$5 billion worth of potash, \$11.1 billion worth of grain and \$5.25 billion worth of coal.

In addition to moving the potash, the wheat and the coal, the bulk commodities, this work stoppage is also impacting the manufacturing sector, the auto industry specifically. Auto parts are the third largest container import good that enters Canada through the west coast ports. This work stoppage is preventing these parts from being shipped to manufacturers here in Ontario.

Along with some members of our caucus, last evening I met with representatives of car manufacturers who told me that without the parts they need, assembly lines will slow down or stop, resulting in lost production and, depending on the duration of the work stoppage, possible layoffs affecting all auto manufacturers.

In regard to container traffic, \$200 million of cargo is traded through the port of Vancouver alone every day. That cargo is destined for Canada's economic trading partners and the homes of hard-working Canadian families.

The economic impact stretches even further as Canada's rail companies paid \$787 million in fuel last year, property taxes, sales and other forms of taxes in 2010, and over \$2.5 billion annually in wages and benefits. That is the money that circulates through the entire Canadian economy. I think members can understand why our government is so concerned about the work stoppage at CP Rail and the fact that activity has been ground to a halt.

I want to be clear. Resorting to a work stoppage is not the norm for labour relations here in Canada. In fact, it is just the opposite. When the labour program is engaged through mediation and conciliation officers, 94% of negotiations and disputes are actually resolved without a work stoppage. We do see this, undoubtedly, as the better option.

Government Orders

When parties choose to resolve their differences, both the employers and the unions carefully consider the importance of maintaining the strength, the viability and the competitiveness of their operations. When parties choose to resolve their differences, they are recognizing that work stoppages and labour instability leads to long-term and generally detrimental impacts on the future of their company, on job prospects for new employees, on the customers they serve and on the national economy. However, that has not happened in this case and we are on day seven of a work stoppage.

There is no denying that negotiated agreements work. As we have always said, the best and the longest lasting solution to any labour dispute is when the parties come to an agreement at the table. However, there are instances when the parties are just too far apart to reach a compromise.

Let us look at the current dispute. In the case before us between CP Rail and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, there have been repeated efforts to break the impasse and the parties have tried to reach contracts for all the people who are involved. The TCRC, the teamsters, and the CP Rail representatives actually started negotiating in October and November 2011. The main issues in this round of bargaining for both units are important. They are pensions, health care benefits and working conditions.

● (2050)

However, by mid-February of this year I received notices of dispute from the employer for both units indicating that they needed some labour intervention. We provided the parties with the services of two conciliation officers for both unions' bargaining units. It made sense to have the same conciliation officers for both units so that we could have some consistency in the process.

Unfortunately, reconciliation was not achieved and, quite frankly, things have not progressed toward negotiated agreements. As such, the parties were released from conciliation on May 1.

On May 16, I met with the representatives in Calgary where I proposed a five point plan that would have provided extended mediation services for 120 days to the parties, as well as have a third party expert in pensions at the table, which would have delayed the possibility of a work stoppage. This was in recognition of the difficulties the parties had in terms of negotiations. Unfortunately, the union rejected this offer and the work stoppage began on May 23.

Even after the strike commenced, we provided assistance to the parties every single day.

However, on Sunday, May 27, the mediators tabled draft terms for voluntary arbitration that represented, in their view, a compromise solution to help address the impasse and avoid back-to-work legislation. In very short order, in under an hour, both parties rejected this compromise voluntary arbitration.

As a result, the officials from Labour Canada withdrew their services because, in their opinion, they determined that the positions of both parties were so entrenched that no forward motion was possible.

In situations where no resolution is in sight, where a strike is ongoing and the lives of Canadians and the health of the economy

are being affected, the government has no option but to act. Indeed, the government has an obligation to act, which is why our government is introducing Bill C-39. It would end the work stoppage but it would also provide the parties with an interest-based arbitration process to help them resolve their conflict with the help of an arbitrator.

I can assure my hon. colleagues that this was not our first choice. Members on this side of the House do believe in the right to collective bargaining and would much prefer to see labour disputes resolved by the parties involved, as it is done a vast majority of the time. Our government only intervenes in situations where the public interest is seriously threatened, which is the case today.

History will show that, in 1995, the Liberal government at the time was faced with the same economic situation as a result of a rail labour dispute. It was during the debate on the back-to-work legislation in 1995 that the Liberal labour minister, Lucienne Robillard, stated in the House of Commons:

We would be lacking in our duty to the people of Canada if we allowed a work stoppage in the railway sector to threaten the stability of our economy and the jobs of the thousands of workers affected by this dispute.

It is this duty to Canadians and to our economy that I am asking for this House to support Bill C-39, an act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations. It is because there is so much at stake for individual rail workers, the company, businesses and their employees who depend upon CP's services and, quite frankly, ultimately, the economic recovery itself.

I would ask hon. members to ask their constituents, particularly the businesses in a constituency. I know what they will hear. They will hear that we cannot afford an extended work stoppage in one of Canada's most important transportation systems. The risks to jobs, to corporate profits and Canada's global competitiveness, frankly, are too great. Like other industrialized economies around the world, Canada is coming out of a difficult economic period.

While our government is proud of our record of sheltering Canadians from the worst effects of the downturn and laying the foundation for recovery, we all read the papers every day.

● (2055)

We all know our country is not immune, however, to currents in the world economy, events beyond our borders over which we have no control. We have uncertainty in Europe at the moment, and there very well could be more turbulence in the days and months ahead. Therefore now is not the time to risk our economy, especially considering that we are making steady progress in creating jobs and restoring consumer and investor confidence.

Government Orders

I do want to remind my hon. colleagues that as of April 2012 our unemployment rate has dropped to 7.3%. That is a definite improvement over last year. That is no wonder, because we added 58,000 new full-time jobs last month alone. However, to maintain this progress and to promote economic growth we need to be vigilant. We cannot afford to allow labour disruptions to continue in a major industry so crucial to domestic trade and our international exports. A labour stoppage in this key sector of our economy would be a serious impediment to our recovery and growth, because quite frankly, the domino effect throughout the economy of a prolonged work stoppage at CP Rail could mean major losses at home or abroad.

What needs to be understood is this. There is much more at stake here than issues on a bargaining table. The employees represented by the Teamsters want to be treated fairly and they want our respect for their rights under the Canada Labour Code. Our government clearly understands this. However, Canadians have rights too and Canadians gave us a strong mandate to protect the economy. This strike affects more than CP Rail and its workers. It affects Canadian businesses, Canadian exporters, Canadian farmers, Canadian miners and Canadian ports, and it affects Canadian families. A prolonged strike puts other people's livelihoods at risk. It is those people's interests that we are acting for in proposing this legislation.

In opposing the bill, the opposition is putting its pro-union ideals squarely ahead of two things, common sense and the national economy. Its vision is narrow and it only stands up for special interests. I urge all hon. members to pass this bill as quickly as possible.

• (2100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to take this brief opportunity to respond to the speech made by the Minister of Labour, who praised the values of the railways in Canada and told us just how important they are, how wonderful they are, how great they are, and how much they are loved.

In the NDP, the official opposition, we also love the railways, but we would like the workers who make them run and keep the freight trains rolling to be treated with a little more respect.

The first thing that comes to my mind is "Oops, I did it again". The Conservative government is incapable of restraining itself from interfering in things that are none of its business: labour relations and collective bargaining, which have to be conducted freely. This is the third time. There were Canada Post and Air Canada and its pilots and mechanics, and now the people at Canadian Pacific are paying the price of the Conservatives' ideology. The question I want to ask the minister is quite simple.

Does this government recognize the right of working people in this country to associate and bargain freely? With its laws forcing workers back to work and imposing terms on them, is this Conservative government in the process of subtly, under the table, changing the rules that govern collective bargaining in Canada?

Essentially, is what you want to do to change the Canada Labour Code to take the right to strike away from working people?

The Deputy Speaker: I remind all hon. members that they must address their questions to the Chair.

[*English*]

The hon. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I will start from the beginning. Should the government be involved in this matter? The answer is absolutely. We are acting in the best interests of the national economy and the Canadian public. To facetiously say that it is something we did by mistake is completely incorrect and quite insulting, frankly.

We are here on a mandate from the Canadian people to protect the economy. We take it very seriously, and sometimes we have to make tough choices and tough decisions. We have to balance the interests of the whole versus the individual. That is exactly what we are doing in this case.

In terms of changing the Canada Labour Code, there is no desire, no underhanded device in order to do it. We are very clear on 60 years of parliamentary precedence in railway strikes. We are intervening on behalf of the Canadian public and on behalf of the national economy.

• (2105)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one thing we all know is that back-to-work legislation really indicates failure, not success.

One thing that has been well publicized in past pieces of legislation that have been tabled by the minister is that they were tabled contrary to advice received by senior department officials, and we know the past legislation tabled has resulted in two charter challenges and two extended court battles.

I ask the minister if in this case there was any such representation from her senior officials. If so, what ramifications of this legislation do we anticipate down the road?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, first of all, I'd like to correct the alleged facts that were brought forward by the member for Cape Breton—Canso. Indeed, what he said with respect to officials providing advice is incorrect. In fact, the advice I am provided by officials is very professional advice based upon the facts on the table, and I act on the advice of the officials in the best capacity I can.

That being said, this is different legislation. It is interest-based arbitration and it is tailored to fit the needs of the parties in this current dispute specifically. It is on the advice of officials, it is from within the discussion of the cabinet and it is very much appropriate for the situation we have right now.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here debating the procedural motion, which allows for the quickest possible passage of the restoring rail service act. There are some members who argue we should let this go on and on, who knows for how long, for further bargaining between the two parties, which has already been shown to be not very effective.

Can the Minister of Labour please explain the necessity to expedite the passage of this bill?

Government Orders

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, indeed, we are on day seven of a work stoppage, of a strike, and it is incredibly important to make sure we get the CP Rail trains moving as quickly as possible for the national economy.

The ministers of industry, natural resources, agriculture and transport have all heard from their stakeholders, and we've heard from our stakeholders here in the country that it is getting very tight concerning the ability to move cargo and to receive cargo in the country, and that is going to have an effect on their business operations and on their employees.

We are on day seven. Traditionally, in the past, we have seen severe economic circumstances develop after seven to nine days, and indeed, I hope we will be able to deal with this matter expeditiously so we do not face that situation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Madam Speaker, the problem with this government's special legislation is that Canadian workers invariably end up worse off in terms of salaries, pension funds and working conditions.

How can the Conservatives claim that this legislation is good for Canadians, when the Canadians working for these companies are being systematically penalized? Are they not active participants in the economy too?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, indeed they are, and they are an incredibly important part of the economy, and CP Rail is as well, but the point is that these parties had the ability for the last eight to nine months to negotiate their own deals. They also had the ability in the past eight to nine months to recognize, if they were asking for difficult concessions at the table and they were not going to receive them, that they should find their own way to an arbitration process, to a mediation process. We in Labour Canada have offered both an extended mediation process and a conciliation process, and all these things have been rejected by CP Rail and by the workers.

The effect of the strike is ongoing, and the effect of the strike is on the national economy. It is the obligation of the government at this point to take a look at the greater good for the economy and the greater good for the national interest and to act appropriately. In this case, acting appropriately is introducing this legislation and having quick passage.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am really beginning to question the sincerity and genuineness of the intentions of the government with this legislation. I say that for two reasons. One is, if this were such an essential service to Canadians, then the minister would designate rail service as an essential service, by which would accrue a number of rights to the employees.

Number two is that the minister and the government are only emboldening the railway company. The reason I say that is they have had the rail service review since March of last year. They have been comatose on the file and have done nothing about it. That is hurting farmers, and I am convinced that their only interest is supporting the railway companies.

● (2110)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Speaker, I will remind the member not to question our sincerity and genuineness because at least we stick to the same script, whereas his party flip-flops all over the place. In 1995, it introduced back-to-work legislation. In 2007, it supported back-to-work legislation in the rail industry. Today, all of a sudden, it has a different beat on it. What gives?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to rise in this House this evening to defend the fundamental rights of the workers of this country. Today, those rights are being threatened, I could even say violated, by this bill that, once again, we must now study in this expeditious, but unfortunate way.

At the same time, I rise with very deep concerns about the direction that, day after day, this government is imposing on the House and therefore on our society and its communities. The Conservatives' vision and direction are frankly authoritarian and show a thinly veiled contempt for the workers of this country, for its ordinary men and women who, every morning, get on the bus and, every evening, make their lunches and their children's lunches, so that they can go and earn their living by the sweat of their brows. This government has an outrageous soft spot for those who run the big companies and the big banks in this country.

This government is completely out of touch and unapologetically ideological. It keeps telling us that the invisible hand of the market will solve all of society's problems. According to their ideology, simply encouraging individuals working in isolation to achieve their own ends is the way to achieve the common good. As progressives and social democrats, that is not a vision we share.

Deregulation, privatization and liberalization in other countries have failed miserably. Among the more recent examples is that of the "Celtic tiger", the European dragon, Ireland, which for years adopted a neo-liberal approach and now lies in ruin while a neighbouring country, Iceland, consulted its citizens and took a different approach that was in the best interest of its people.

Last summer, around this same time, shortly after the historic May 2 election, I had the honour of rising in the House with my new colleagues, particularly our friend and former leader, Jack Layton, to fight for the rights of postal workers. The government conspired to lock them out. They were the very first victims of the government's wrong-headed, backward and anti-worker policies.

I am proud of the fact that I rose in the House back then along with all of my NDP colleagues, because that is the real reason we were elected. We were elected to stand up for people, and that is what we are doing today as New Democrats and progressives in Parliament.

We have to stand up to protect everyone from this right-wing government's attacks. A year later, little has changed in the House. Unfortunately, this government keeps doing the same thing over and over again. If it were as harsh with itself as it is with repeat offenders, we might be headed in a better direction right now.

Government Orders

This is the third time in a year, or the fourth if we count the two different groups of Air Canada employees. That is quite extraordinary. This government has a laissez-faire attitude, but it intervenes directly in a bargaining process and disrupts the existing balance when it comes to negotiating a collective agreement.

It intervenes to tell workers at a private company that they cannot collectively decide on their working conditions or negotiate them. This right is recognized not only under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but also by the Supreme Court. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that collective bargaining is a fundamental aspect of Canadian society. Today this fundamental aspect is being attacked by the Minister of Labour and the Conservative government.

I would like to make an aside, because it is important to put Canada's legal and international obligations into context.

Together with the International Labour Organization, Canada signed Convention 87 on the freedom of association and protection of the right to organize.

• (2115)

This convention recognizes the right to free association and bargaining.

I will cite the opinion of Michael Lynk from Western University in Ontario on this freedom of association. The quote is in English because the original version is in that language.

[English]

The right of unionized employees to strike through the peaceful withdrawal of services in order to defend their economic and social interests has been widely accepted as one of the pillars of the freedom to associate, along with the right to organize and the right to collectively bargain. Although the right to strike is not explicitly stated in either Conventions Nos. 87 or 98, the caselaw developed by the Committee on Freedom of Association and the cumulative reports of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations have read the right to strike into the meaning of the freedom of association. A leading ILO study that reviewed the jurisprudence of the two Committees has stated that: "the right to strike is a fundamental right of workers and their organizations;" "strike action is a right and not simply a social act;" and "the right to strike is essential to a democratic society." The Committee on Freedom of Association has ruled that: the right to strike [is] one of the essential means through which workers and their organizations may promote and defend their economic and social interests.

[Translation]

The government's violation of the constitutional right to strike and the freedom of association has already been challenged twice in the case of Canada Post and Air Canada. It is quite likely that this evening's bill will be added to that black list.

Government intervention hurts relations between workers and management. Once again, the government is unwise to meddle in an area that is none of its business. It is interfering in the collective bargaining process, and, it bears repeating, it threatened to pass special legislation not 24 hours into the strike. The government is going to create a situation that will spoil labour relations at Canadian Pacific. This will leave scars. People will no longer be motivated at work. They will be upset and frustrated, and rightly so. That is what this government is about to do. That is unfortunate.

Experts representing managers, workers and unions all agree that interfering in free collective bargaining will worsen the already tense relations between employers and employees.

George Smith—who is now at Queen's University, but who was a negotiator for Air Canada and CP in the past—has pointed out that the government is naive to believe that it can legislate peace in labour relations and is actually making the situation worse. He said:

[English]

Naively, the government thought it could legislate certainty and legislate peace, and neither of those things have resulted.

You're mortgaging the future, and not knowing how much that mortgage is going to cost. In spite of the appearance of labour peace, there is no such thing.

[Translation]

The Conservative government continues to make bad decisions.

Not only does the government propose bad solutions, not only does it act when it should step aside and leave it up to the two parties to negotiate freely, but when the government is asked to act to save jobs, it is asleep at the wheel. The government was incapable of enforcing the Air Canada Public Participation Act on behalf of Aveos employees when 2,400 people were mercilessly laid off, including 1,800 workers in the Montreal region, where I have the honour of representing the residents of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

We have a government that stays sitting on its hands, that does nothing, that does not lift a finger to save people who had good jobs, were well paid, and contributed to the economy. In the case in question, the government did not want to get involved because it stated that it was not its business, that it was a matter for the private companies themselves. Yet, when the private company is Canadian Pacific and it is having problems at the bargaining table, it takes less than 24 hours for the sword of Damocles to be brandished by the Minister of Labour and for that sword to be placed above the heads of Canadian Pacific workers. We in the NDP find that unacceptable because it demonstrates a lack of respect for workers.

One should not be too surprised, however, because this very same government is also directly attacking Canadians' and Quebecers' pensions. Yet barely a year ago, during the election campaign, the Conservatives never came clean about their intention to increase the eligibility age for old age security.

• (2120)

Yet before an audience of billionaires in Switzerland, the Prime Minister saw fit to announce that he was going to make changes. Now, he never mentioned this to Canadian voters, which very clearly demonstrates a lack of respect and a contempt for Canadians. Moreover, it is an attack that will affect the poorest workers, those of most modest means, which is unacceptable, just as it is unacceptable to attack the employment insurance system. This will hurt temporary workers, contract workers and seasonal workers.

This government does not care about people, does not care about the little guy, does not care about workers; it just wants to force down wages. The Conservatives know one direction and one direction alone when it comes to pensions and wages: down, down, down, except in the case of their corporate fat cat friends.

Government Orders

We need to say it frankly and stop beating around the bush. I believe that this is the first time in history that we have ever had a government that hates the government so much, meaning that the government detests the state that it leads. It does not like the state. It does not like social programs or the redistribution of wealth. And yet, it is running this country, while trying to smash it up and diminish it. It can readily be seen that it is an authoritarian government that feels deep contempt for our parliamentary and democratic institutions. It is a government that prefers intimidation to discussion. It is a bulldozer of a government that gagged parliamentarians more than 20 times in a single year. It is appalling, using closure more than 20 times.

Once again, debate is being limited on a special law that forces a return to work at Canadian Pacific. It is unacceptable. Members want to discuss and exchange ideas and to debate them, but the Conservatives do not like debates.

I am going to refer to two numbers, because I like to use numbers from time to time. The three readings of the current bill have been limited to three and a half hours of debate. For an act that is going to affect 5,000 families in Canada, this is completely unacceptable. Later on, when we meet in committee of the whole, one hour has been scheduled for discussion, when there are 308 members in this House. I took out my calculator and did a little math. If every member in this House were given the opportunity to speak, each would be able to do so for 11.7 seconds. Eleven seconds is what the Conservative government is offering us to discuss this bill in committee of the whole. This is unacceptable and appalling. It is beginning to be rather obscene. It is obscene to see this government destroy the legacy of social programs and institutions that were established with a view to a better society, a more just society in which people live in dignity through good jobs.

Workers are the ones who fought to abolish child labour. Workers fought for a weekend off—except, it would appear, the workers at Canadian Pacific—and for a 40-hour week, instead of having to work 12, 14 or 16 hours a day, as they used to. It is workers who fought for an employment insurance system and for health and safety protections. None of this fell from heaven. People fought for these things. It was not bosses or the government who decided all of a sudden one fine morning that it would be very nice to offer these things.

Let me provide my colleagues with some context by explaining why people at Canada Post, Air Canada and Canadian Pacific are so angry. They certainly have a right to be angry. The 100 most highly paid CEOs in Canada earned \$44,000 in the first three days of 2012. They earned \$44,000 between January 1st and 3rd. That is the average salary of a Canadian worker, the average annual salary. The CEOs pocketed the same amount in two days. On average, the 100 elite CEOs in Canada make 189 times more than the average Canadian worker.

Take one as an example. The CEO of Canadian Pacific earned \$6.5 million in 2011, in one year. That may seem like a lot, but compared with his severance pay, it is peanuts. He quit his job and is no longer the CEO of Canadian Pacific. His severance was \$18 million. These are the same people who are targeting the pension plan of 5,000 workers, who had the effrontery to ask them to slash their pension benefits by 40%. That is money they themselves

have put aside. Today, management is trying to twist workers' arms and shove unacceptable cuts to their pension scheme down their throats.

● (2125)

Pension plans are under major attack everywhere in Quebec and Canada. We in the NDP are going to stand up and defend workers' pension plans.

I have a hard time understanding how a company that made a profit of \$570 million last year, made a profit of \$142 million last quarter and for the last four quarters has paid its shareholders a significant dividend is a company in difficulty. How come this company has to launch an attack on the pension plan of 5,000 Canadian families? How did we as a society get to that point today? Why is this Conservative government like the tower of Pisa? It always leans the same way, and never towards Canadian workers. It is unacceptable.

Why is it that Canadian Pacific cannot resolve the problem of worker fatigue? This has been a problem for years. The workers' requests and demands are rather simple. Since they are always on call, since they are always available and their vacation disappears all the time, they simply want to have the assurance that they can be at home with their families for two 48-hour periods per month. And they were told no by a company that made \$142 million in profit in the last quarter. Is that the Conservative government's vision for Canada? CEOs get an open bar, while everyone else has to beg for scraps. Is that what the government wants—golden parachutes for bankers and attacks on workers' pensions? These attacks are very real.

A 50-year-old employee with 30 years of service at CP would lose \$9,900 a year if management's demands are accepted, and that employee would have no other options. A younger employee, for instance someone who is 30 and has 10 years of seniority with CP, would lose \$30,000 a year with the changes that management is demanding. That is unacceptable.

It is completely appalling that in a country as wealthy as Canada, the gap between the rich and the poor is only growing. Even people who are working are forced to seek assistance and turn to food banks, for instance. Since 2008, the number of people in the greater Montreal region who are turning to food banks has increased by nearly 40%.

By introducing special legislation—as in the case of Canada Post, Air Canada and now Canadian Pacific—this government is sending a clear message that employers can attack the working conditions of their employees, negotiate in bad faith—as is the case at Canadian Pacific—and their Conservative bodyguards will come to their rescue whenever they need help. The message being sent to employers is that they no longer have to negotiate. The Conservatives are always there to help them along and impose repressive legislation.

Government Orders

This has resulted in a serious imbalance in our labour relations regime, which is based on free bargaining by management and the union, where one party can exert economic pressure on the other. When a special law is imposed, the balance of free collective bargaining is upset. As we heard earlier, this is vital to our bargaining regime and has resulted in more peaceful labour relations and civility in our society.

Now we have a government that is already moribund, after being in power for just one year, and that has added insult to injury with its Trojan Horse. This mammoth bill amends 69 existing laws and is more than 450 pages long. The government also imposed closure on this bill. And what does the bill contain? It contains even more sustained and vicious attacks against workers, despicable changes to employment insurance and old age security, and the repeal of the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. What we see here is perfectly aligned with the Conservatives' policies.

In closing, when it comes to the challenges of pension plans, the challenges of Canadian Pacific employee fatigue, and the challenges of employment insurance—with the pressure to reduce the salaries of seasonal, temporary, contract and self-employed workers—the picture looks pretty bleak. However, I would like to finish on a more positive note. I would like to finish with a message of hope for Canadian and Quebec workers.

The NDP will always be there standing beside workers and fighting the Conservative government's regressive policies. It will be there proposing real change and an alternative way of doing politics.

• (2130)

Our brand of politics will support the majority of the population, 99% of workers. We just need to be patient a little longer and continue to fight for a better society.

There will be an election, and together we are going to oust this government, which does not care about the concerns of Canadian workers.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just listened to my colleague's speech.

If we were to follow his logic, there would be no more mail in Canada. In his opinion, that is not important. There would be no more planes in the sky. In his opinion, that is not important. There would be no more trains on Canadian tracks. In his opinion, that is not important either.

If there are no more trains, there will be no more parts for cars and trucks. As a result, sooner or later, there will be no more cars and no more trucks.

I would like my colleague to tell me what his vision is of the Canadian economy given the current circumstances. What is his vision for the Canada of 2012, 2020 and 2030?

I would like the member to give me a coherent response.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to answer this question, because the NDP's vision is a long-term vision; it is a vision for the world, a vision for people, a vision for the

environment, and one that respects workers. That is our vision; that is what we are proposing.

When my colleague states that Canada Post would no longer exist, I am trying to understand what he means. I think that he means we fought for the workers at Canada Post.

If this government had really wanted the mail to be delivered, it would have done the simple thing that was being asked of it: it would have lifted the lockout. There is nothing complicated about that, in my opinion.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to compose myself. I hear the Conservatives talking about how they are fighting for jobs. I am sure the 19,000 federal civil servants who are receiving separation slips over the next couple of months will be inspired by the comments coming from the government tonight.

One thing that recent history has shown us is that back-to-work legislation in no way guarantees peace and harmony within the labour sector. We have seen two charter challenges arise from past actions of this government. We have seen two court battles arise as a result of back-to-work legislation from the government.

I ask my friend from the NDP this question: does he think that this will go anywhere at all towards making the CP Rail work atmosphere and work environment any more peaceful and productive?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked an excellent question.

The Minister of Labour's decision to introduce back-to-work legislation for Canadian Pacific employees was unwarranted, hasty and irresponsible. Furthermore, she is basically putting off finding a solution to the real problems.

We have always believed and maintained that the objective should have been a negotiated solution and not back-to-work legislation. The parties should have had the opportunity to continue their talks. I do not understand why threats to bring in special legislation were made when not even 24 hours had passed since the strike began and the workers were exercising a right recognized by the charter, the international community and the Supreme Court of Canada.

Putting off problems until tomorrow, as our Conservative friends are wont to do, will not result in good labour relations and ensure that people are able to work together and move forward.

• (2135)

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague must think, as I do, that workers do not enjoy a strike. Striking is a last resort. The same is true of employers, although some enjoy strikes: a lockout ought to be a measure of last resort.

Government Orders

Special legislation forcing people back to work ought also to be a last resort. This government can be seen, and it has even said as much, in connection with Canada Post, Air Canada, and now Canadian Pacific, to have been using it as a first resort, which is unacceptable and appalling.

The minister did not answer my colleague's question earlier when he asked her whether she simply wanted to abolish the right to strike. I think that this government is not only taking away people's right to strike, the right of workers to strike, but even denying them ordinary pressure tactics. It amounts to killing a fly with a bazooka. That is what this government is doing. In terms of labour relations, this attitude is sending out a horrible message.

I would like to hear my colleague's comments about this.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I do indeed share my Quebec colleague's concerns and apprehensions.

In fact, even though there has not yet been any speech or bill that shows us that the right to strike is being attacked, the repeated use of back-to-work legislation amounts to successive attacks against the exercise of this right. In the Conservatives' view, the right to strike only applies if it does not disturb anyone. That is not how pressure tactics work. Of course people are disturbed, just as people are disturbed during a lockout, which deprives workers of their wages and their income. What exists between employers and unions is a balance of power.

Now, we have the impression that every time workers governed by the Canada Labour Code attempt to exercise their right, the Conservative government is there to take it away from them. We find this unacceptable. That is not how you treat people.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his extraordinary speech. He has always stood up for the rights of workers, and we will support him. We are proud to see that he is carrying the torch in the fight against Bill C-39 today.

He said something extremely important about industrial peace.

It is essential in labour relations. This peace was never given a chance, either in this situation or in those involving Air Canada and Canada Post. By the way, I want to point out that the Conservative Party has lost the support of tens of thousands of workers who, I promise you, will remember.

This industrial peace is essential to a healthy work environment. What will happen in three or four years when people come to the bargaining table to bargain in good faith? What will happen then?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, my New Democrat colleague has asked an excellent question.

Yes, it does create tense and poisoned situations. It is easy to imagine how pleasant it must have been for the last few months to be working for Canada Post or be a pilot at Air Canada. Now it is Canadian Pacific's turn.

There is reason to be worried for the future, because when people try to exercise their right and have it taken away from them, that causes frustration and anger that can blow up later on. If legal methods do not work because the government takes away a

constitutional right and shackles and stifles the expression of demands, what is left? What message is the government sending? It is telling workers to shut up and take what they get. Is it inciting them to do something illegal?

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has talked several times about defending workers. Many of the workers in my riding are part of the auto industry. The auto industry in Newmarket—Aurora, across the GTA, and in much of southern Ontario depends on rail service to get parts back and forth. Tens of thousands of jobs are wrapped up in that industry.

When we are in such a fragile economic time, I wonder first why the member would want to risk our fragile economy. Second, I wonder how he justifies saying that he is defending workers when the workers in my riding will be out of work when there is no rail service to transport their products. Could he comment about the fragile economy he is creating?

• (2140)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, it is quite interesting to hear my Conservative colleague.

There is a kind of paradox among the Conservatives. Every time working people organize to use pressure tactics or exercise their right to strike, it is dangerous because the economy is really fragile. I would like her to tell that to the Minister of Finance or her Prime Minister, who are constantly saying that the Canadian economy is in very good shape and they are creating gazillions of jobs. It is one or the other. It cannot be both at the same time.

I think working people throughout Canada were not threatened by the CP strike when it had been going on for 20 hours. Once again, this was a premature, unjustified decision that upset the balance of power at the bargaining table and took away any incentive or motivation on the part of the employer to bargain in good faith. That is what the Conservatives have done.

[English]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Vancouver Centre.

Once again we are faced with back-to-work legislation. Canada Post, Air Canada, and the list goes on—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I have to interrupt the hon. member. As the hon. member may know, at this stage of the debate members would need the unanimous consent of the House to share their time, this being the third round of speeches.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to share my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, by its actions the government has telegraphed to Canadian businesses that they do not need to bargain in good faith with their unionized employees.

All businesses have to do is let time run out, leaving workers with no option but to withdraw services. Then, like a white knight, the government will ride to the rescue and force the workers back to work.

The Teamsters negotiators understand that the world economy has suffered and that the Canadian economy, while in a better position than most, is still fragile. Teamsters came to the bargaining table willing to work with Canadian Pacific in order to come to a fair and equitable contract, a contract that was fair for Canadian Pacific and its shareholders and fair for the men and women whose work ensures that Canadian Pacific earns the profits necessary to continue to pay its shareholders the highest premiums in 30 years.

Canadian Pacific has taken advantage of the government's willingness to play white knight. Its negotiators refused to negotiate with the union. Its position on all issues has been, "This is what we want; take it or leave it. The government will legislate you back to work."

Canadian Pacific was counting on the government to step in. The government's willingness to introduce back-to-work legislation has become the elephant at the negotiating table. Management can make unreasonable demands, say no to reasonable negotiation proposals and bargain in bad faith. There is no incentive for the company to negotiate.

The government must let corporate Canada know that it will not solve all its labour problems. The government must let corporate Canada know that trampling on workers in the name of corporate greed will not lead to back-to-work legislation. The government must tell corporate Canada, "It is up to you to negotiate a fair and equitable collective agreement with your employees, not the government."

When it became clear that the only option for the union was the withdrawal of work, Teamsters indicated that in order to ensure that commuters in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver were not affected, it would continue to operate the commuter trains. They said their disagreement was not with the Canadians who were trying to get to work so that they could support their families, it was with Canadian Pacific.

Canadian Pacific's reaction to this offer was a flat "no". Canadian Pacific was willing to make thousands of Canadian commuters suffer because it was not willing to bargain in good faith. Thankfully saner heads ruled, and Canadian Pacific finally agreed to allow the commuter trains to operate.

Many Canadians are probably asking themselves what the issues are and why the two sides cannot come to an agreement. I can answer the first one. The issues are pensions and fatigue management. I will have to leave the answer to the second question up to fair-minded Canadians to judge for themselves.

Canadian Pacific is asking the men and women who operate our trains and ensure that they run safely to take a 40% cut to their pensions. It is asking a 30-year-old employee with 10 years' service,

who has another 25 years to work before getting a pension, to take a pension cut of \$30,000 a year. Is that fair?

There are over 2,000 Canadian Pacific non-unionized management employees who are members of the CP Rail defined benefit pension plan. These non-unionized employees pay less money into the pension plan and receive a larger pension income than the unionized employees.

These employees are not being asked to take a 40% cut in their pensions. In fact, the non-unionized employees are scheduled to receive an increase at the end of this year. Is that fair?

The clawback of the unionized employees' pension benefits will put this money into the hands of Canadian Pacific. This is not money that Canadian Pacific earned; it is money that the employees earned. This windfall for Canadian Pacific will be paid out to shareholders that are now dominated by an American hedge fund investor. This is corporate greed at its very worst. This is not fair.

A tired worker is not a safe worker. We have learned this the hard way in both the trucking and air industries. I was parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Transport when the issue of fatigue management in the trucking industry was raised, reducing the 18-hour work day to a 13-hour work day.

I had the pleasure of getting in one of the Teamster trucks and going from Montreal to Ottawa to Toronto. It took us 18 hours. By the time we came back, the driver was exhausted. The same thing that applies to the people who are driving our trucks and to the pilots who are flying our planes should be applied to the people who are driving our locomotives.

● (2145)

That trip earned me a lifetime membership in Teamsters Canada. A good friend of ours who sits in this room, from Vancouver, is also a Teamster. Therefore, we have a union of two. Maybe we will start a local here.

While the 13-hour workday is not perfect, it is much better and safer than the 18-hour workday.

The House has spoken on the issue of worker fatigue and how it affects the safety of the individual workers and Canadians at large. We have defined hours of work in transport and in air.

Earlier this month, the Railway Safety Act received royal assent. The House spoke in one voice. We need to have defined hours of work in the rail industry. We need to have fatigue management incorporated into the rail industry.

The Teamsters' negotiating team proposed a fatigue and fitness clause that incorporated a successful pilot project, which was conducted in eastern Canada from 2007 to 2011. Canadian Pacific refused to consider this proposal.

Government Orders

Last Saturday, I had visited the Teamsters members at the McCowan rail yard when they were striking. I spoke with one of them. He told me that when he was called out to work, he was away from home for up to 53 hours, either working, or on call, or taking the legislated rest periods. Due to the maintenance on the tracks, a 6-hour trip can take up to 10 or 11 hours. He then has downtime. If he is lucky, he can get on the train to bring him back home to Toronto if it is ready. Unfortunately, this is not often the case. Therefore, he must wait. However, he must be ready on two hours' notice to get on the train to bring him back home, which is another 10- or 11-hour trip.

Canadian Pacific requires all of its employees to be fit and rested for duty at one time they are called to work. However, Canadian Pacific does not permit its workers to report that they are unable to work because of fatigue without threat of disciplinary action.

The workers are asking for two 48-hour periods of rest per month to help manage fatigue and to assist in the recovery of sleep deprivation. This proposal would allow employees to sleep in their own beds on two consecutive nights, twice a month. This is not unreasonable.

We should never have a strike on the issue of worker fatigue.

Canadian Pacific has thumbed its nose at the House and has said, "We don't care what you think about worker fatigue. We will do what we want".

It is time for the government to tell Canadian Pacific that Parliament makes the rules, not CP.

I ask the Minister of Transport to ask his department officials to immediately begin the necessary fatigue science studies so that regulations can be prepared as soon as possible. It is time to ensure that the men and women who operate our trains have reasonable, defined hours of work.

Teamsters Canada has filed a bad faith bargaining complaint with the Canadian Industrial Relations Board. It believes that Canadian Pacific has not bargained in good faith, but has relied on the government to legislate the workers back to work.

I believe that all fair-minded Canadians also believe that Canadian Pacific bargained in bad faith. That is why we are in the position we are today.

• (2150)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my friend's comments although, quite frankly, he was entering into details of collective agreement negotiations when all this legislation would do is refer those matters to arbitration, where I am quite certain that an intelligent and reasonable resolution would be reached.

One thing we know for sure is that all around the world economies are in trouble and are faltering and we are walking on eggshells. We want to ensure that the Canadian economy remains strong and remains vibrant. Every time we have a major national disruption, the opposition votes to continue it. It refuses to support our efforts to limit damage to the economy.

I would like to know why the member opposite does that when the parties have been unsuccessful in their talks for so many months, since late last year.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my colleague across the way realizes that one of the issues we are talking about is worker fatigue.

I live in a constituency that has right beside it Agincourt Yard. The trains go back and forth. It is up to the employees, especially the Teamsters, when they drive the trains, to ensure that nothing happens. Should a derailment happen and dangerous goods are involved, my constituency would be in harm's way.

Therefore, it is up to us, this House, to ensure that employees' rights are not trampled upon. The government is allowing Canadian Pacific's corporate greed to enter into it and is legislating the employees back to work. That is all it is doing. It does not care about negotiations. It does not care about unions' right. It says, "Let's trample upon them. Let's throw them away. Let's support Canadian Pacific."

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I first want to congratulate the 4,800 workers who are currently on strike and who have continued to provide services, whether in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver.

For those workers, the government talks about the need to protect the economy. What would the economy be without working people? What are universities without students? There is no possibility of doing anything without workers. There are alternatives, like Canadian National, that can offer services and other options.

Can the member explain why he thinks they are so intent on not bargaining directly with the workers?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, negotiations were in place. Canadian Pacific all of a sudden decided to thumb its nose at the Teamsters union and walked away. What happens? The Conservative government steps in to legislate them back to work.

It is interesting. I met workers on the line in Toronto, Scarborough and in Winnipeg. I heard the same story, that should something happen while they were driving the train if they did not have the appropriate sleep or rest, who would stand up and take the risk? Who would step up and be responsible? They are responsible, but when they go in and say that they cannot do the shift, Canadian Pacific steps up and says that it will take care of them later on.

Therefore, negotiations have to take place and the government should stop being on the side of Canadian Pacific, with the greed of the company.

Government Orders

● (2155)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we look back at what has taken place with the back-to-work legislation put forward by the government over the last number of months, it is like several bad episodes of *Hell's Kitchen*, where preparations may be ongoing, but when it comes time, the government has one temperature over there and it is on fry. What it has done is just toasted the relationship between workers and the company. We have seen that with Air Canada, Canada Post and we see it again here.

What is at risk is that for other corporations and federally-regulated industries, this will become common practice, that they will rag the puck. They will come down to a decision time and know that the minister will be coming in with back-to-work legislation. I would like my colleague's comments on that.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, indeed, in one year three unions will have been legislated back to work: Canada Post, Air Canada and now the Teamsters.

If we look at what happened with the post office, there was such a big wedge driven in between the employees and Canada Post that relations, even after almost a year, have not gone back to normal. It is the same with Air Canada. There are pilots today who are looking at options. They are saying that they were forced back to work and are using work to rule in order to not fly a plane.

I can assure my colleague that not only the Teamsters and Canadian Pacific will be at odds for a long time, but other companies in other jurisdictions will say that they have the government to protect them, that those people will legislate anybody back to work. That will be the history and the morality of the Conservative government of today.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about this from a different perspective. I want to talk about the back-to-work legislation from the point of view of what I see as abuse of power.

As we sit in this very privileged place, all of us who have pensions, medical and dental benefits and work in a safe environment, it is easy for us to talk in the abstract about the economy and what it needs, forgetting that an economy must be sustained by workers. If workers are not there to make corporations survive and therefore make profits, then they will soon die. It is cyclical. We cannot do one without the other.

That is why negotiations are so important and why a responsible government would not enter into the business of negotiations unless it believed it had come to a point where things had to be handled because they had gone awry. We saw that in 1995, when we had three rail strikes going on at the same time. The whole country was crippled. No one could go anywhere. The government was then forced to step in and the NDP supported us in our back-to-work legislation.

However, one has to allow that to take its time. One has to allow negotiations to occur. Negotiation and the psychology of it builds trust between employers and employees. It creates a sustainable environment in which employees work productively to the benefit of the company. That is psychology 101, not rocket science.

When a government intervenes, it plays a hand that it should not play. As we have heard everyone in the House say before, it is signalling to the employer that it is prepared to step in at any time. The employer then does not negotiate in good faith, the employees become mistrustful, angry and frustrated, tensions occur, we see strikes happen and then the government steps in.

This is a great short-term solution. Sure it gets people back to work. Certainly, it makes everyone think that the economy is doing well. However, in the long term it creates such a toxic labour environment that companies and workers can no longer sustain each other and have to break apart. There will be workers who will no longer want to work in certain sectors even though that is the only skill they have, mainly because they know the minister will intervene in those sectors so they will not have their constitutional right to bargain.

The idea of a constitutional right to bargaining goes back to something else I want to mention, and that being the slow bleeding of democracy in this place. A democracy adheres to the rule of law. The Constitution is the major umbrella law by which any government governs itself and its country. When a government decides that it can turn over and ignore the Constitution any time it wishes to, that again is not only an abuse of power, it is a flouting of the rule of law. The government knows that the rule of law is an important principle to any democratic country. Here we have the government again abusing its power, flouting the rule of law and the constitutional rights of its citizens.

Today we heard about the economy. The point is the economy will not survive unless in the long term there is some kind of trust, peace and a relationship between employers and employees. The government is ensuring that in the long term that will no longer occur and we will have continued decades of labour unrest and businesses not being able to thrive. That is the long-term blow to the economy about which the government talks.

Let us talk about the specifics. My colleague talked about the issue of safety. I am not surprised at all that the issue of safety is ignored by the government. Look at what it has done. It has been cutting back on Coast Guard rescues and food inspections. It seems to think that everything that deals with the safety of Canadians is not worthwhile and disregards it, playing instead into the hands of companies, corporations and businesses and ignoring the safety of the public. Safety is an issue.

● (2200)

Over the last four years, an average of 1,198 accidents have occurred on railroads. That is 1,198 accidents, 61 main-track derailments in a week on an average, 210 at crossings, 160 accidents involving dangerous goods in any one year, 81 fatalities in any one year over the last four years. This is about the safety and security, not of workers but of the communities through which the railroad passes and in which the railroad crossings are located. This is an important issue. Do we think the economy is more important than that? On the issue of fatigue, this is a short-term solution and it actually ignores the safety of Canadians once again.

Government Orders

We sit here very privileged. We have pensions. We have medical and dental benefits. We can sit here on our high perch and talk about what other people need. There is a huge gap in this country between the rich and the poor. The middle class, which is a solid indicator of a good democracy, no longer exists. The way we would go with EI, in which we would force people to take low-wage jobs and the way we would treat workers, in which we would force them to take lower-wage jobs and not negotiate with them appropriately for pensions, means the state would have to take on the burden of caring for every person who is in the low-income bracket, as we would see rising poverty and the rising number of low-income workers.

At the end of the day, the state would have to be responsible for the pensions and the health care and the well-being of our seniors. It is not long-term sense. It does not add up. It is not good math. It does not show the outcomes as very feasible and helping the well-being and benefit of this country on the whole in the long run. Then again, the government does not seem to care about that.

I will talk about the fact that when we look at the responsibility of government it should be not only to take care of this country immediately and in the short term, but to prepare a path in the long term for a strong economy, a strong social system and a strong society in which all people are able to pull their weight and build an economy. When people are in low-paying jobs or do not have jobs and are dependent on the state, who is going to pay the taxes to enable the state to support the people who are dependent on it? If anyone does not see that the government is turning what should be a virtuous cycle into a vicious cycle, this is exactly what the government is doing.

Here we are. If the government thought it won in the five times it intervened in labour negotiations in the last year, we now see it has created chaos that continues. It has created bitterness, long-term anger and unrest. We have two court challenges. The pilots' union is carrying on a court challenge and Canada Post carried on a court challenge.

Finally, I will refer members to what the judge who looked at the court challenges under Canada Post had to say. He said that the minister “would like the exercise of ministerial power...to be unobstructed, unguided or not subject to any criteria of qualification or competence for the arbitrator. In other words, the Minister would merely have to act in good faith and deem the person qualified for it to end the Court's judiciary review exercise.” He also said that “this is not indicated by common sense, case law, the economy of the Act or the specific labour relations context that govern the parties to the collective agreement”. In other words, the minister is interfering and not allowing justice and negotiations and the citizens to have their rights in this instance. This is bad for Canada in the long run.

• (2205)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague speak to the issues that are before us tonight. One thing she avoided mentioning was the amazing cost to the economy of this ongoing strike. We talk about it in terms of the weekly cost of roughly \$0.5 billion to the economy, but more important is the local cost to our ridings. I have heard from people in my area who have indicated that unless they are able to bring raw materials into their company within a few days, their

company is in jeopardy and the jobs of the people that the company employs are in jeopardy.

Does my colleague not care that if this strike continues there would be many more hundreds of people, or probably tens of thousands of people, out of work?

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member nodded off at some time during my speech because I did say that the economy was important. I did say the government had a responsibility to ensure that the economy was strong, but not on a short-term basis. It is like, as a physician, my patient walking in and me not really caring about the long-term survival of the patient, but putting on a Band-Aid and saying “look, the bleeding has stopped, everything is fine” and sending the patient home. That is not how we deal with problems. They have to be thought out because the economy will suffer in the long run.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Liberal member a question.

In this kind of intervention, does she not see a parallel with the undue use of antibiotics in the world of medicine?

This is like using a sledgehammer to swat a fly. Large companies are used to this kind of reaction now. They are used to the government's interventionist attitude.

This government's greatest sin, in my view, is having a short-term vision. The result of constantly prescribing various antibiotics for toothache is that the antibiotics no longer have any effect.

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I want to quote George Smith, who, ironically, was a former labour relations director for both Air Canada and CP Rail on the employer's side. He stated that the government is “worsening employee relations at federal employers by their constant interventions”. He went on to say “you cannot legislate labour peace” and that the government's intervention brings long-term instability and distrust between the employees and employers that are ultimately unpredictable and unproductive and harm the economy in the long run.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing I have picked up from the questions being posed by the Conservatives throughout the evening is that they are not sensing that in each piece of back-to-work legislation that the minister has brought forward, including this case, even before the legislation is tabled, she tips her hand well in advance. She told the parties that she was going to introduce back-to-work legislation.

Government Orders

I am sure the executives at CP Rail spent the weekend on the golf course. As they knew that the legislation was coming, they did not have to focus on any negotiations so they could get 18 or 36 holes in. It was a great weekend. Why not? These are the actions we have seen time and again from the minister. Would the member like to comment on that?

• (2210)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right, which is what we have all been saying. When the minister tips her hand before the process even begins, she wonders why nothing comes of it. She wonders why the negotiations have not come to a resolution. The reason that they do not is because she has tipped her hand. She says, “It really doesn’t matter what you do. I will come in like Supergirl and fix everything for you”. The bottom line is that she is not fixing; she is harming.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is one group of workers that I have not heard her speak to. I was a carpenter in another life, but I have not heard her talk about forestry workers, mine workers, automotive workers and farmers. She mentioned a very large sector of our economy, but failed to mention those huge sectors of employees.

Although you referred to union employees, you certainly did not talk about these workers in any favourable terms. I am curious about your position on these folks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind the hon. member to direct questions and comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about CP Rail at the moment, so I am sorry if I did not spend my time talking about all the workers. Indeed, the government is now beating up on the seasonal workers in the farming communities and the agricultural sector. It is beating up on the construction workers who can only work at certain times of the year. How do I feel about those workers? I think that they are getting the short end of the stick from the government.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-39, an act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations. Our government has received a strong mandate from Canadians to protect our economy and create jobs and we are delivering on that commitment.

Statistics Canada confirmed that in April employment—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle is rising on a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier you said that the unanimous consent of the House was needed to share speaking time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Well, we are now in the fourth round. After the first three rounds, it is possible for hon. members to share their time with someone else.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour.

[*English*]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada figures confirm that in April of this year employment increased by 58,000, mostly in full-time work. This was the second consecutive month of notable gains on the jobs front for Canadians. Moreover, confidence among Canada’s business leaders, a leading indicator for future economic growth in job creation, edged up in the first quarter of 2012. According to The Conference Board of Canada, business leaders showed increasing optimism over the future performance of their firms and the Canadian economy.

We can add to these glowing statistics the support for our economy contained in the Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act recently introduced by the Minister of Finance. As a result of our government’s efforts, Canada has an economy that is the envy of many other countries in the western world. At a time of global financial uncertainty, at a time when sluggish world demand is impeding job growth, why would we allow anything within the boundaries of our own country to jeopardize our economic prospects? Why would we deliberately undo the good work that has protected our economy so far?

Canadian Pacific Railway is one of the iconic components of Canada’s vast transportation system. Founded in 1881, the railway itself is a phenomenal engineering feat. It is one of the reasons we exist as a nation, uniting Canada from coast to coast.

In the 21st century CP Rail remains a crucial player in Canada’s economy. Each year CP Rail moves freight in Canada valued at approximately \$50 billion. According to Transport Canada, CP Rail annually carries about \$11.1 billion worth of grain, \$5 billion of potash and \$5.25 billion of coal.

I would like to tell the House how the CP Rail work stoppage is harming Canadian businesses. In October 2009 the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management report estimated that four key Canadian bulk shipping industries, oilseed and grain farming, coal mining, wood products manufacturing, and pulp and paper and paper products manufacturing contribute more than \$81 billion to the Canadian GDP each year and account for close to 1 million jobs.

I find it staggering to contemplate the losses these four sectors of our economy will suffer as a result of the disruption in CP Rail shipping services. These services are very essential for these key sectors of our economy.

Government Orders

It is no mere metaphor to describe CP Rail's 22,000 kilometre network as a lifeline of our nation's economy. Moreover, its capacity for facilitating trade within Canada and other nations is enormous. This is a rail network that operates in six provinces and 13 states. It extends to the U.S. industrial centres of Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, Washington, New York and Buffalo. Agreements with other carriers extend CP's market reach east of Montreal within Canada, and throughout the United States and into Mexico. By moving freight to and from Canada's west coast ports, CP Rail is also a vital link to the markets in Asia through the Asia-Pacific gateway.

This work stoppage is preventing our ability to keep products moving in and out of Canada and undermines Canada's reputation as a reliable place to do business. This is a setback from which it could take years to recover lost business and lost investments. Is the House prepared to stand by and allow a vast number of Canadian businesses to continue to be harmed as a result of the CP Rail work stoppage? As with any company, every lost day of business could weaken a firm that is already coping with reduced revenues.

A rail work stoppage has created an unsettling business climate. Businesses do not like uncertainty. When businesses do not feel confident about the future, they may postpone opportunities to expand, or change their shipping suppliers altogether. They may even lay off some of their employees. At a time when we want to build jobs and nurture our economic recovery, can we actually sustain this risk? Do we want this stoppage at CP Rail to jeopardize our work and achievement to date and put our recovering economy in peril?

The answer must be a resounding no. The time for action must be now. The legislation will end the work stoppage at CP Rail and provide the parties with an interest-based arbitration process to help them resolve their outstanding issues. The failure to reach a collective agreement has not been for lack of trying. The Government of Canada has done its utmost throughout the negotiation process to encourage the parties to reach an agreement. However, despite assistance from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the parties have been unable to resolve their differences.

● (2215)

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Minister of Labour and the mediators and conciliatory officers from the labour program for their efforts to assist the parties under the Canada Labour Code.

Canadians can take pride in the fact that 94% of labour negotiations in this country are settled without a work stoppage ever taking place when the labour program's professional mediators and conciliatory officers get involved. This would definitely be the preferred option for resolving the disputes under consideration today. Sadly, this preferred option is not one that was chosen for this dispute between CP Rail and its running trades employees and rail traffic controllers.

I will emphasize again that intervening in these disputes is not the option we would choose if circumstances were otherwise. The Minister of Labour always encourages parties to work together to find mutual solutions to their differences. Most regrettably, it would

seem that the will to come together for such a resolution does not exist with the parties in this case.

Our government fully recognizes that free collective bargaining is the basis for sound industrial relations. This is also clearly stated in the preamble of the Canada Labour Code. That code gives the parties the right to strike and lock out. Intervention is only in situations when the public interest is negatively affected. This is true, for example, when the national economy is affected by a work stoppage, as it is in this case.

Let us keep the statistics that are crucial in mind. CP Rail handles 74% of potash containers, 57% of wheat containers, 53% of coal and 39% of other containers in this country.

I would like the House to reflect on just a few questions. First, can we afford to let Canadian businesses and our economy continue to suffer? Second, can we let down the people of Canada who are counting on us to act? Third, can we deliberately undermine our enviable position of being one of the few nations in the western world to weather the global economic downturn?

To my mind, the answers to these questions are self-evident and that is why we must act now. I urge the members of this House to join me in doing the right thing. Let us give our full support to Bill C-39 to protect our economy.

● (2220)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the comments that were made. However, we are seeing over and over again that the Conservative government does not seem to understand that unionized workers are actually our neighbours, brothers, sisters and fathers, and they play an important role in our society. They are our service providers as well.

With respect to CP Rail, I wonder if the member is aware that the whole issue here is the government taking away the rights of the workers. It is a collective bargaining right, where there is an equilibrium for the employer and employee. By forcing this back-to-work legislation, the government is actually siding with the employer, an employer who seems to forget that for the last 108 years these CP workers have been paying into a pension, which they are about to lose.

I wonder if the member could actually consider that in her deliberations and realize that it is about protecting the workers' pensions, wages and well-being because of the hours they have to work.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, the reason the government is acting now is that it is in the best interest of the Canadian public.

In my riding of Simcoe—Grey, we have the largest Honda plant in the country. Right now it is in a position where it will have to start asking workers not to come to work because it actually cannot move its product.

Government Orders

I say to the member opposite that we have allowed the opportunity for these two parties to come together. In fact, on May 22, the minister offered an additional 120 days and the parties said no.

So let us be very clear. The parties are unwilling to come together. They are entrenched. We need action now to make sure the Canadian economy is protected. That is why we are putting forward this legislation.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague across the floor.

We hear an awful lot about the economic rationale and justification for this intervention. Following that logic, can the member please stand and tell Canadians who are watching the debate this evening in what instance the government would not intervene?

There are work stoppages that occur on a regular basis. These, of course, have an impact on customers, on inventory and on deliveries. The government has already intervened repeatedly in a single year four or five times: Air Canada, Canada Post, CP Rail.

Could the member please inform the House in what instance the government would not interfere in collective bargaining?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, 94% of disputes that come forward are actually resolved before there is any work stoppage. In this case, this has a huge impact on the national economy, more than \$540 million per week. In the case of this ongoing work stoppage, it represents an increasing loss to the Canadian economy, not just affecting rail but affecting the forestry industry, the auto industry, coal and grain seeds. We have heard from farmers.

Let us be honest here. This is about acting in the interests of the Canadian public. That is what we are doing. That is why we have brought forward this legislation. That is why we are acting now.

• (2225)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, if this were the first piece of back-to-work legislation in the House, I might take a different view of it. We do know that CP is an important service provider. We do know the rail needs to move.

As my colleague from Ottawa South just mentioned, we have now seen repeated interventions that are undermining the fabric of collective bargaining rights in Canada.

If the hon. parliamentary secretary and her government believe that Air Canada is an essential service, that Canada Post is an essential service and that CP rail workers and the Teamsters Union are an essential service, then why do they not declare them essential services?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I rose in the House yesterday and I presented earlier today as well about how the Minister of Labour has been listening, and listening not just to unions and big union bosses but actually listening to Canadians.

What Canadians are most concerned about is our fragile economy and making sure they have a job. That is why we are moving forward with respect to this back-to-work legislation to make sure the rail is moving, to make sure jobs are protected and to make sure we can grow the economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, for Official Languages and for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a responsible government must show leadership and act in the best interest of the majority. This means that it must occasionally make difficult decisions and take necessary measures to resolve specific situations. That is what we are doing tonight.

We are overcoming the impasse in the labour dispute between Canadian Pacific Rail and the two Teamsters Canada Rail Conference bargaining units, one representing running trade employees and the other rail traffic controllers.

The government introduced Bill C-39 to ensure the continuation and resumption of Canadian Pacific services. Why? Because Canada's ongoing but fragile economic recovery simply cannot withstand the impact of a prolonged Canadian Pacific work stoppage.

Allowing the dispute to get out of hand would deal a severe blow to our economy, which is just now getting back on its feet. If there is one sector in which a work stoppage can have serious economic repercussions, it is the rail transport sector.

In a country with an area of almost 10,000 km², railways have been and continue to be a preferred means of transportation, especially when it comes to transporting freight. Agricultural products, forest products, chemical products, metallurgical products or everyday consumer goods—a host of industries rely on the approximately 22,000 km of railway that Canadian Pacific uses to transport and deliver the materials needed to manufacture those products and take them to markets. Any interruption in the Canadian Pacific services has an impact on other sectors and their workers.

As an article in the Canadian Press from January 26, 2012 said, and I quote, “The Canadian Pacific Railway transports coal, fertilizer, grain, vehicles, consumer goods and other products across North America. So it is commonly viewed as a barometer of economic health.”

In a very competitive and increasingly interdependent global market, all inputs count, all deadlines are critical and jobs are fragile. Without our intervention to ensure continued service, a growing number of businesses and workers would be affected.

It has to be remembered that Canada is one of the countries in the world that relies most heavily on international trade. We depend on international trade to ensure our prosperity.

Think about it. By virtue of its geographical position, our country is a crossroads between North America and the burgeoning economies, such as those of China, India, Korea, and Japan.

The rapid, safe and uninterrupted flow of goods along our supply chain and transportation network is a decisive factor in ensuring the vitality and success of our trade.

Government Orders

Most of Canada's bulk commodities and a lot of our manufactured products are transported by rail to their export destination. According to Transport Canada, in 2010, Canadian Pacific alone transported 74% of the potassium, 57% of the wheat, 53% of the coal and 39% of containers across Canada. Moreover, our railways are used to transport many imported products.

For example, the major increase in shipping trade over the past 15 years, especially by container, has been largely driven by Chinese exports. These containers are shipped to destinations in Canada and the United States through efficient intermodal gateways and corridors, which are a key factor in competitiveness.

The Canadian Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor offer world-class maritime, rail, road and air transportation infrastructure.

• (2230)

These are important assets, and we have set ambitious goals regarding this gateway and corridor with a view to bolstering Canada's economic outcomes.

However, the success of these initiatives depends on cooperation by all partners, including CP Rail. When a single link in the chain is broken, everything grinds to a halt. A work stoppage means that Canadian Pacific's activities cease, thereby blocking the flow of goods through the Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor.

To give listeners an idea of the importance of Canadian Pacific to our transportation infrastructure and supply chain, the value of freight transported by the company is estimated at approximately \$50 billion. Clearly, any extended work stoppage at Canadian Pacific would foil our efforts to make the Asia-Pacific gateway and corridor a reliable segment of our transportation infrastructure, which would be extremely damaging to our economy and our reputation globally.

One thing is certain, an economy in which goods do not flow properly would be quickly compromised, and the alternatives are extremely limited. There are only two class 1 railway freight transportation companies in Canada: Canadian Pacific and Canadian National.

What is a class 1 railway? It is one of the largest goods piggybacking services based on operating revenue. For those like me who are unfamiliar with railway vocabulary, let me explain specifically what piggybacking is. It is the process of transporting truck trailers on special railway flat cars. CN has confirmed that its capacity to increase traffic would be very limited.

For example, for grain, CN could only handle no more than 10% of Canadian Pacific's freight. As for VIA Rail, well, it could not mitigate the negative impacts of a work stoppage at Canadian Pacific, because it is designed for passenger travel. A work stoppage would also have a negative impact on VIA Rail activities, because some of its trains travel on tracks that belong to Canadian Pacific. No trains could travel on these tracks without the approval of the rail traffic controllers.

We are here debating the merits of this bill because the very stability of railway traffic and the future of our economy are at stake. Negotiations between Canadian Pacific and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, which began in October and November 2011, are at an impasse because of major differences.

The collective agreements for the running train employees and the rail traffic controllers units expired on December 31, 2011. On February 17, 2012, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service received a notice of dispute from Canadian Pacific. Shortly thereafter, two conciliators were appointed to work with the parties—one for each unit—to ensure that the process was consistent.

For those unfamiliar with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, it was established to help employers and unions subject to the Canada Labour Code resolve and prevent disputes. It therefore makes conflict resolution services available to employers and unionized employees in the form of assistance from conciliators and mediators.

The mandate of these third parties is precisely to help the parties reach agreements. It is true that it would have been preferable for these parties to have been able to resolve their dispute themselves. Everything possible was done to bring them closer together. Unfortunately, there are no signs of a favourable outcome.

• (2235)

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from the Quebec City region said this was a difficult decision to make. If the decision were all that difficult, then it would not be made so often. This is the third time the government has introduced special legislation. Despite its so-called goodwill, it says it is difficult to come to an agreement.

How can the Conservatives hope to come to an agreement when they ask the workers to give up 40% of their pensions, to give up the chance to balance work and family life and to give up the chance to simply see their salary indexed to the rate of inflation?

After that, the government says it tried to come to an agreement where the employees sacrifice everything, where all the sacrifices were one-sided. The government says that it will come and make a decision, but as usual, it always decides against those who do the work and not those who will come out \$17 million ahead.

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, we were elected to make decisions in the interests of all Canadians. As I said in my speech, the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service was established to provide dispute resolution and dispute prevention assistance to trade unions and employers under the jurisdiction of the Canada Labour Code.

The service offers employers and unionized employees tools for dispute resolution through the services of conciliation and mediation officers. These are third parties whose mandate is to assist both parties in reaching an agreement.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the parliamentary secretary is going to win any Oscars tonight. We are going to have a little chat about important matters.

Government Orders

He wants to tell me about the economy. I want to tell him about fatigue and about safety. I am not saying that he tires me out; fatigue is just what I want to talk to him about. Let us consider an employee who is on call around the clock for seven days a week and who, with two hours notice, may be called on to work 36 hours in a row. But there is no way to deal with the situation because that bunch at Canadian Pacific does not want to hear a word about fatigue management.

If he is so close to those who elected him, would the parliamentary secretary be willing to explain to them that there might be a safety issue because Canadian Pacific was unwilling to follow up on what the employees want? Fatigue management looks simple to me. We will not talk about pension funds yet; we will talk about them later because the employees are being robbed. But fatigue management is directly related to the safety of Canadians.

Is the hon. member waiting for a derailment? He wants to pass his special legislation. What does he have to say about fatigue?

• (2240)

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, let me respond to the future mayor of Montreal, because I am sure he is tired of being here in this House.

Our government is responsible and we have been elected to make decisions in the interest of all Canadians.

We have made a commitment to them to promote job creation, growth and long-term prosperity in Canada. That is what Canadians are expecting from us. That is why we have to have the courage of our convictions.

[English]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is it relevant when someone is reading something that he does not understand and when he is not answering my question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am not sure that is a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, this type of question, this type of comment in the House, does not deserve an answer.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that I will probably be the last to speak to this before we have to see the reaction on the other side.

Over and over again tonight, we have heard varying comments. I think the member for Simcoe—Grey had one of the best ones that I heard tonight when she said, “We allowed them to come to an agreement”.

This is collective bargaining between an employer and the employees and she is trying to tell us that the government allowed them to try to come to an agreement. However, within 20 hours of a strike deadline, the government decided it would start talking to them about imposing back-to-work legislation, back-to-work legislation that favours the employer.

The government seems to forget who unionized workers are. Unionized workers are real people. They are not aliens or diseases, as the government would like people to believe they are. It is unbelievable what it tries to depict workers as.

Since the last election, we have witnessed over and over again the government abuse its powers to attack workers, workers' pensions and workers' wages by ramming back-to-work legislation through. We just have to think of Air Canada and Canada Post. Now it is after CP.

We cannot help but wonder who is next. The government just keeps favouring the big corporations over workers and it is trying to race to the bottom. One would think it was a Walmart.

All these workers want is a fair deal, a fair deal that they cannot get under a government that continues to stick its nose in collective bargaining. They want a fair deal so they can actually support their families and support their communities. These are who the real workers are. These are who unionized workers are. They are our brothers, fathers, neighbours and service providers. Their rights are being violated, rights that were recognized by the Supreme Court as being charter rights.

The government keeps talking about the economy. We are the ones who know the direction the economy has been taking. The government did not even believe we were going into an economic crisis until we were there. Now what is it doing? It is putting 19,000 federal workers out of work. Those are federal jobs that will be gone.

The government is attacking the workers' support network, EI. We heard the Minister of Labour talk about the fact that there are fewer people on employment insurance but what she is not telling us is that it is because people cannot access employment insurance.

Instead of putting in training dollars and ensuring there are proper support networks so people can actually get through the phone lines at employment insurance, the government is closing down offices that help support workers. It is laying off people. Then it is attacking seniors and their pensions. Why is it that the government keeps wanting to race to the bottom?

I do want to talk about the CP workers from Chapleau in my riding, people like Brian Ferguson, Michael MacDonald, Jason McKee and Robin Robitaille. They have sent me letters. I have a whole pile of letters here that I hope I will be allowed to table, such as the letter from Diane Tangie Labranche.

What they are talking about is the fact that the attack is basically on their pension and the government is allowing the employer to attack their pension and to reduce the type of pension they will have when they retire. Some of these people have 30 years of service.

Diane Tangie Labranche writes:

As our Member of Parliament we need your support to retain the pension plan that has been funded by our members for over 108 years since its existence at Canadian Pacific Railway.

Government Orders

It is 108 years that they have paid into this pension, a pension where the employer mismanaged the investments and now there is \$1.6 billion deficit. In order for these workers to retire with enough pension to live on they will need to pay for the next five years \$107,000, or \$21,000 annually during this five-year period. It depends on how long they have been there. The more conservative alternative investment strategy considered by the company would have cost only \$2,300 annually over a 15-year period, a far more desirable outcome for all parties and one that would negate the current pension concession demands.

● (2245)

Meanwhile, the outgoing CEO would now have a severance package of \$18 million. Can we imagine that?

Meanwhile, instead of protecting the workers' pensions and instead of protecting the workers' wages, they are attacking the workers.

Here is something else that they tell us:

Many of the employees who would be affected by the pension demands made by our employer stand to have the pensions they have worked many years to achieve dramatically reduced, some of these potentially affected employees have worked for CP for 30 plus years. As a running trade employee I work long hours which frequently occupies 60 or more hours a week away from home working in this heavily regulated environment.

I do not know about other members, but I have seen these railroad workers, and I can tell members that not only do they work long hours but they also do very hard work.

They go on to say:

The nature of my employment requires me to base my work attendance on 2 hours notice to work, this places considerable demands on lifestyle and families. The existing negotiated pension benefits is one of the primary reasons that I have remained a committed CP railway employee.

What members should also know is that during their bargaining, these employees actually ensured that they were going to have good pensions. They decided that they would pay more for their pensions.

Brian Ferguson writes:

The company wants us to degrade our pensions to levels in place at CN. The 2 pension structures are totally different from each other.

They paid higher premiums and they gave a concession that they would work longer in order to ensure that they would keep a good collective agreement, which is about to disappear.

As I am terminating here, I would like consent to table all of these letters that I have received, because they show that these are real people, these unionized workers, and the letters show the government the concerns that they have and everything that they have done and worked so hard to get.

The people from Chapleau, the people from White River, the people from all over Canada who are working for CP are there because they want to make a living for their families, not because they are just unionized workers.

I would hope that we all vote down this legislation.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 10:48 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the

proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

● (2250)

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

● (2330)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 231*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback

Government Orders

Hoepfner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poillievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer— 161	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère

Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogné
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	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)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel
Valeriote— 139	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, the House went into committee thereon, Denise Savoie in the chair.)

[English]

The Chair: I would like to open this session of the committee of the whole on Bill C-39 by making a short statement regarding the proceedings.

[Translation]

Pursuant to an order made earlier this evening, not more than one hour shall be allotted for the consideration of the committee of the whole stage. At the expiry of this period, any proceedings before the committee of the whole shall be interrupted, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the stage under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively without further debate or amendment. No division shall be deferred.

[English]

During the consideration of the bill during committee of the whole the general rules of debate are as follows. Members shall speak for not more than 20 minutes at a time and are not permitted to split their time. While there is no formal period for questions and comments, members may use their time to either speak or ask questions and the responses will be counted in the time allotted to that member.

Government Orders

Finally, members may speak more than once and need not be in their seats to be recognized.

[*Translation*]

The committee will now proceed with the clause-by-clause study of the bill. Pursuant to Standing Order 75(1), the study of clause 1 is postponed. I am now going to open clause 2 for debate.

● (2335)

[*English*]

The hon. Minister of Labour.

(On Clause 2)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Chair, in an ideal world parties in a dispute would settle their differences quickly and amicably. They would work hard to understand the other's point of view. Moreover, they would appreciate that their disagreement could have far-reaching consequences for people not directly involved. Armed with this knowledge and insight, they would compromise for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

Unfortunately, our world is far from ideal. Despite months of negotiations between the parties, we are now in the midst of a work stoppage at CP Rail. This strike is resonating far beyond the confines of the rail industry as well.

Given its impact on our economy, the government is acting today in the national interest. However, our actions have generated a predictable course of objections. We have been accused of misusing our powers and undermining the right to collective bargain. We have been told that we are moving too quickly. Finally, it has been suggested that the problem is not serious enough to warrant back-to-work legislation. None of the objections hold water.

Since 1950, the Government of Canada has consistently intervened with back-to-work legislation in the railway industry where there is a work stoppage. Our actions today follow the time honoured footsteps of many previous governments, governments that were equally concerned about the impact of shutting down all or part of our rail industry.

I have been asked if I think the government is undermining the collective bargaining process many times by people in the opposition. Quite frankly, the answer is clearly no. I would like to make it perfectly clear that this government remains firmly convinced that collective bargaining is a far better way to resolve disputes than emergency legislation. It is significant that there is nothing in the legislation to prevent the parties from modifying any provision in the collective agreements, either new or changed.

It has been almost five months since the expiration of the collective agreements covering rail traffic controllers and the running trades employees. Like all concerned, the government hoped that CP Rail and the two units could reach agreements and settle their differences, but that has not been the case.

On February 17, I received notices of dispute for CP Rail for both units. Subsequently, on March 2, the labour program appointed the same two federal conciliation officers for both units to ensure consistency for the process. In other words, far from undermining the collective bargaining process, the government has taken steps set out in the Canada Labour Code to help the parties try to resolve the

differences. Despite these efforts, the parties remain at an impasse. Therefore, on March 1, they were released from conciliation.

I met with the parties twice in May to offer them extended mediation to help them reach agreements or at least move forward on some of the remaining issues from the bargaining table. At the bargaining table, there were serious issues such as pensions, wages, benefits and working conditions. Regrettably, the assistance was not accepted and on May 23 the strike began.

Unfortunately, the parties did not manage to reach an agreement. As a result, they have caused serious economic problems in our country by initiating work stoppages. As the government, we took the necessary steps and acted for Canadians and our economy.

This government respects the rights of unions to strike and the right of employers to lock out their workers as is set forth in the Canada Labour Code. We would most assuredly prefer not to interfere with affairs of CP Rail, but we are not prepared to stand idly by as a work stoppage cripples vast sectors of our economy.

To the question from the opposition on moving too quickly with the legislation, I think not. I realize that the parties have tried to settle their various disputes, but this government is faced with a situation that requires immediate and decisive intervention.

The parties have had ample time to reach an agreement and they have received help from experts in mediation. At this point, we cannot expect that they will see eye to eye any time soon. We cannot wait any longer, not when our economy hangs in the balance.

The Leader of the Opposition said today that he believed it was not even a question of acting too soon. He would prefer not to act at all but that we encourage both sides to continue negotiating, even during a work stoppage with their talks halted.

● (2340)

Why is that? I submit that is because he does not understand that this work stoppage is a real threat to others outside the rail industry. I hope he does not believe that in our globalized economy, where markets can turn on a single tweet, that freight rail has become a relic because we completely disagree with that.

CP Rail has grown into a vast network of some 22,000 kilometres operating in 13 American states as well as six of our own provinces. For many farmers and miners, freight rail is the mode of choice to get their products to market and CP Rail is the company to which they most frequently turn. In 2010, according to Transport Canada, CP Rail transported 74% of our potash, 57% of our wheat and 53% of our coal. All totalled, the value of freight moved by CP Rail in Canada is nearly \$50 billion, each and every year.

Government Orders

In 2009, a report by the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management indicated the important role played by four Canadian bulk shipping industries that used freight rail. Oilseed and grain farming, coal mining, wood products manufacturing and pulp and paper and products manufacturing contribute together more than \$81 billion to Canada's GDP. Moreover, they keep one million Canadians at work. In other words, freight rail remains indispensable to our economy.

It is not just important to the 15,000 or more people who work at CP Rail. It is also clearly vital to the farmers, miners and forestry workers who depend upon rail to move their products across the continent and beyond and to all those whose jobs are linked directly or indirectly to the rail industry.

If this work stoppage is prolonged, it will translate into further job losses. With no trains running, the implications of this work stoppage are widespread. In addition to affecting farmers, miners and forestry workers, it is also impacting auto workers. Auto parts are the third largest container import good that comes through Port Metro Vancouver. This work stoppage, this strike, is halting the shipment of these parts to manufacturers in Ontario. Without these parts, assembly lines will slow down or stop and that will result in lost production and layoffs.

Do not forget that through partnerships with other modes of transport like shipping or trucking, the silence on train tracks can vibrate far beyond our own waters and our own borders. CP Rail is a vital link in moving freight to and from Canada's west coast ports, which are such an important part of the Asia-Pacific gateway. This work stoppage is preventing our ability to keep products moving, it undermines Canada's reputation as a reliable place to do business and it is a setback from which it could take years to recover lost businesses and lost investments.

We have two class I railways in our country and it is true that Canadian National does have some capacity to move freight. CN estimates were that it could pick up nearly 10% of CP Rail's grain traffic, but probably less for other sectors. However, the fact remains that about 20% of CP traffic simply does not have direct access to CN's rail network.

We cannot count on CN to pick up the slack during this work stoppage and VIA Rail cannot help fill the void because it is designed to transport passengers, not freight. Most important, we cannot rely upon a speedy conclusion to negotiations that have dragged on without success and finally broke down this weekend. We must act.

First, there is 60 years of parliamentary precedent for a government to introduce back-to-work legislation in a rail industry work stoppage.

Second, the bill does not circumvent the collective bargaining process, especially considering all the support we have given to help these two parties reach a solution.

Third, we are not acting too quickly. The stakes are much too high to wait for the parties to have a change of heart.

Finally, the rail industry is not a self-contained sector that we will simply leave to its own devices. It is an integral part of the economy,

it is linked to other modes of transportation and the producers who depend on rail to deliver their goods demand our respect. The work stoppage at CP Rail is having serious repercussions and this government is not prepared to let it continue.

There is no question it is best for parties in a labour conflict to resolve their differences, but the parties in the CP Rail dispute have been trying now for some time without success and there is no reason to think they will be successful in the days ahead.

• (2345)

In this time of global economic uncertainty, Canadians have given our government a strong mandate to protect the national interest. When we look closely at the implications of a strike at CP Rail, we see billions of dollars and more than a million jobs hanging in the balance. Therefore, in the best interests of all Canadians, the government is acting. We are asking for support to pass Bill C-39, which will end the work stoppage and also provide the parties with an interest-based binding arbitration process to help them resolve their conflict without a strike.

It is not an ideal world, yet I still urge hon. members to set aside their differences for the benefit of all Canadians and join with us to give this bill a rapid passage.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Chair, the first thing I would like to note at this late hour is that this is the 25th time that debate on a bill in this House has been squashed and shut down. This is an affront and an offence to all parliamentarians, and the first thing I want say is shame on the government for yet again trying to shut down debate on a very important matter in the House of Commons here in the Canadian Parliament.

I heard earlier, in the drive-by second reading debate, I might call it, that the minister said the government is only interested in intervening where the public interest is threatened. Let us take a look at what the public interest is really about and what the Conservative government is actually supporting.

CPR is a profitable private corporation. Its net income profit in 2011 was \$570 million. In fact, the last four shareholder dividends have been the highest in the last 30 years. What is really interesting, though, is that the CPR board of directors, in a recent shakeup as a result of American-based hedge funds, is now moving in. We all know how much it represents the public interest. I would like to place a wager that this shakeup had only one goal, that being to increase the shareholders' return or profits by seeking to extract the maximum value they could. As is so often the case in these money grabs, someone else had to pay and it is no surprise to learn that in this case, as in many other cases, it is the employees of CPR.

Unfortunately, it is no surprise either that the employer is making a beeline for the hard-earned pensions of these workers. I would like to give a couple of examples of that. This is what some of the demands of CPR will mean for workers in that company.

Government Orders

A 50-year old employee with 30 years' employment in CPR will lose \$9,000 every year. A 50-year old locomotive engineer with 30 years service who lives and works in British Columbia, who has 5 years left to work before being able to retire, will see his pension reduced by \$9,000 every year, should CPR be successful in its demands. This worker has invested his entire adult life into this career. He is preparing to retire and has absolutely no alternative to replace the pensionable income that CPR wants to take away from him. This worker has paid a higher contribution than at any other railway company. He has paid for his pension benefit and now the government, through its actions, will advantage the employer in its efforts to extract a significant concession from working Canadians at CPR.

Here is another example. A 40-year old employee with 20 years of employment at CPR will stand to lose \$27,000 a year. A 30-year old employee with 10 years of employment at CPR will stand to lose more than \$30,000 every year.

Members can begin to see the very real impact of what this employer is trying to do to its workers in taking away their hard-earned pensions.

Sadly, CPR is not alone in its haste and enthusiasm to rob Canadians of their hard-earned pensions. It has a powerful ally in the Conservative government, which is leading the way in destroying income security programs for Canadians. How ironic that only today Parliament debated Bill C-25, the pooled registered pension plans act at third reading, yet another—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Libby Davies: They may clap, but this is an example of another private pension scheme that helps virtually no one but the big financial institutions.

Where is the public interest that is being upheld? Does it lie at the corporate boardroom table and the profit margins of a profitable company like CPR, or does it lie with making sure that there is a level playing field and that the collective bargaining process is given a fair chance to work?

The public interest is also about ensuring safety on our rail lines. I find it astounding that we have a Conservative government that purports to uphold safety and indeed continually seeks to divide our society into the simplistic division of criminals versus victims, yet when it comes to the safety of workers it is willing to use the sledgehammer of back-to-work legislation to uphold corporate interests and not something as basic as the safety issues that these CPR workers are facing.

• (2350)

I would like to reference the government's own Fatigue Management Plans: Requirements and Assessment Guidelines revised in March 2011, which spells out, and I quote:

Transport Canada recognizes that fatigue is one of the most critical safety issues facing the railway industry today. There is no doubt that fatigue has a detrimental impact on human performance and safety. While solutions to fatigue exist, there is no 'one size fits all' solution, which will easily solve all fatigue-related problems. One counter measure alone is not enough, nor is the sole reliance on legislated maximum hours of work.

This is a significant issue for these railway workers who are on strike, this issue of safety and fatigue, and I would argue that it definitely represents a broad public interest in maintaining and strengthening the safety of our rail system. The employees of CPR hold enormous responsibility for the safe transport of goods and people across the vast network of lines across Canada.

Does the minister even know what these basic issues are about? We know from the workplace that employees in freight service are called by phone to work on a two-hour notice. Employees are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are no traditional days off. Until called the employees are often unaware of their destinations or when they will return home, and employees can be away from home for up to 36 hours.

The union proposal is designed to allow employees the opportunity to have two consecutive nights in bed twice a month. That is their proposal, and it is certainly in line with the government's own report guidelines.

Surely this is a fair and significant issue for these workers, yet it and other issues get swallowed up and quashed by the heavy-handed approach of the government. When we see a government in a headlong sprint to legislate back to work not once, not twice, but three times, we can only conclude it has no respect for collective bargaining and the important role unions play in our society. If at every opportunity the Conservatives choose legislation over proper process, if at every opportunity they seek to divide people and to scapegoat unions as we have seen their members do with Bill C-377, we can only conclude, contrary to what the minister says, that they do not represent the public interest. In fact, they despise any—

The Chair: I am going to interrupt the hon. member for a moment.

There is too much noise in the House. I am asking for a little bit of order and respect while the member completes her intervention.

Ms. Libby Davies: Madam Speaker, I would point out there is too much noise on one side of the House. Those members are disrespectful even of debate in the House. In fact, they despise anything public about the public.

I am proud to be here tonight, no matter what the hour, no matter what the circumstances of this gag debate, no matter what the votes, to speak out with my colleagues in the NDP, who are not afraid to uphold the public interest of fair labour practices, safety for workers and their families and safety for Canadians overall.

As the member for Outremont and leader of the official opposition said, "With every piece of back-to-work legislation—and every ideologically driven change to our laws—the Conservatives are chipping away at what Canadians have worked so hard to build". We are standing up tonight against the bill, clause by clause, line by line, because we believe in something quite fundamental, the basic premise that in a free and democratic society, workers have the right to collective bargaining and the right to dignity and respect.

The Conservatives choose the corporate board rooms and are quite happy to put their feet up on the table with ease and comfort with their corporate buddies. We do not.

Government Orders

The CPR executives are raking in millions at the expense of their employees. The government has tilted the scales heavily in favour of the employer. We choose to keep the scales in a fair balance and to ensure that the rights of workers in Canada are upheld and respected.

● (2355)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Chair, if there is one thing Canadians can recognize, it is the emergence of a bit of an overall demeanour, a policy development demeanour on the part of the Conservative government. When I say policy development demeanour, I mean when it develops policy its belief is “da meaner, the better”.

In this case, in dealing with organized labour in this country, we have seen that approach, the meaner, the better. When it comes to collective bargaining in this country, our party believes in fair and honest collective bargaining, something I have seen over the course of this debate that separates us from the Conservative Party. What we have seen is no example whatsoever of any kind of belief.

The Conservatives like to talk the talk, but the walk is not there. The actions they have undertaken certainly show no respect for collective bargaining. Canadians do not have to take our word for it; there are enough experts in this country.

I would like to quote David Doorey, from York University's School of Human Resource Management, a lecturer at London School of Economics, speaker at Osgoode Hall—

The Chair: Order. I will interrupt the hon. member again. I would like to ask all members in the House for a little respect while this member is speaking. I am hearing comments from different sides of the House that are very disturbing.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate your intervention.

Professor Doorey weighed in on this highly interventionist federal legislation restricting collective bargaining and the right to strike and lockout in this country. Really, he directed his comments more so at the minister:

[The minister] always tells the media that the government wants a voluntary deal reached by all parties themselves. However, most everyone who knows anything about collective bargaining argues that she is in fact discouraging this from happening by promising employers that the government will step in with back to work legislation designed to prioritize the employers' interests.

We have seen that time and time again.

There has been reference made through the course of the debate here today on legislation that a Liberal government put forward in 1995. I would like to set the record straight on this because several Conservatives have made that point here today and, certainly, the circumstances were completely different. In that case, not just CP but CN and VIA Rail were all involved in various stages of work stoppages.

Rolling strikes had started at CP on March 8, CP locked out employees on March 13, CN employees went on strike on March 18, and VIA got pulled in there, making any kind of rail traffic in this country grind to a halt. Rail service ceased to exist in this country.

So, the minister at the time, Lucienne Robillard, did not tip her hand prior to that. She put together back-to-work legislation, for March 21. The Liberals were in a majority government, but she brought that legislation to the Reform Party—the Bloc was the official opposition at the time—and the Reform Party supported it.

The NDP, at the time, only had nine members in the House. It was not an official party. However, she went to the NDP. Bill Blaikie, who is a respected parliamentarian, I think we can agree on that, came forward with amendments and put forward two reasoned amendments that Madam Robillard agreed to.

Now, that was a majority government that knew that in this place, in order to be successful and in order to serve Canadians, there was an opportunity if parties worked together. Again, this is foreign to the current government.

Bill Blaikie and the NDP supported this back-to-work legislation. Negotiations had gone on late Wednesday. Let me just read a couple of quotes. “Blaikie won from Robillard two concessions” and would end all strikes, not just the CN strike, and “the arbitrators appointed to settle all the issues at nine different bargaining tables would be chosen from the judiciary”.

So, there were two reasoned amendments that Mr. Blaikie put forward and they were accepted.

Mr. Blaikie also recognized that the country-wide dispute certainly had an impact on the economy at that time, and he offered his support, so we saw all-party support on the back-to-work legislation, with the exception of the Bloc.

An hon. member: Then what happened?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Then what happened was the Liberal government balanced the books and recorded surpluses, and these guys came in and blew it all. That is what happened, only after they added \$100 billion to the national debt.

● (2400)

My colleague from Vancouver East talked about this being the 25th time these guys have used closure with their legislation. I want to share another statistic. In the last 62 years, back-to-work legislation has been used 37 times. In the last 62 years, back-to-work legislation has come to the chamber 37 times. These guys have brought it forward five times in the last year. I am not sure what the prize is for that, but they should be hanging their heads. They will get their prize from organized labour when the next election comes.

The government's record has been one of intervention and favouritism. Instead of being neutral and fair, the government has been just the opposite. It prepares back-to-work legislation even before a strike is due or a lockout occurs. It appoints inappropriate arbitrators and enacts back-to-work legislation that imposes even worse conditions than the parties themselves had agreed to. We saw that with the Canada Post situation. It came forward with legislation that offered a lower wage increase than Canada Post had already agreed upon. It is amazing.

Government Orders

It uses the Canada Industrial Relations Board as a pawn. It throws everything into the Canada Industrial Relations Board. We have seen the government's interference and interventionist actions in labour relations in the past. It has done nothing but poison the well of relations between companies and employees instead of cooling parties off. It is like consecutive episodes of *Hell's Kitchen*. With every preparation, it has one temperature over there for cooking, and that is burn and scorch. That is what it has done to relations between management and organized labour in this country. It has scorched relations.

George Smith is former director of labour relations at Air Canada and vice-president of human resources at CP Rail. He has been on the other side of the table, on the management side. He stated:

This has all the appearances of the federal government doing what's best for the country but really it's a disaster... If you are negotiating a difficult labour contract, the process is being taken out of your hands and the government will do it for you. The "showdown" element which hurts in the short run but results in a fair settlement is gone.

We would not dare believe that the government would listen to experts. It has not shown any kind of respect at all for the Parliamentary Budget Officer or any of those people. The minister does not even listen to her own officials. I asked her about that in an earlier exchange. On the legislation on the first Air Canada lockout, her officials advised against it. The officials stated:

This is an option to be used only in very extreme circumstances where there is a serious impact on the national economy – in this instance it would appear to be more of an inconvenience to travellers who would have to rely on other modes of transportation.

I questioned the minister about the advice she was getting from her senior officials this time around. Since she ignored the advice in the past, I asked if she was getting similar advice this time and ignoring it as well. Is this a crisis? The Conservatives have been in government six and a half years and had a crisis in the skills gap, a crisis in the fishery, a crisis in the environment. They should have a department of crises because they seem to manufacture crises. That is one thing they are good at: manufacturing crises.

● (2405)

Let us look back at the Canada Post dispute. The government legislated a lower wage rate. It forced an arbitrator to look at the financial considerations of the company and not the workers. That is another example of legislation undertaken by the government which benefits management and corporations as opposed to workers.

The minister was taken to the woodshed over the back-to-work legislation with Canada Post. She received a scathing rebuke from Federal Court Justice Martineau, who ripped the minister for her involvement. The minister wasted no time in sticking her nose into the collective bargaining process in the cases of Canada Post and Air Canada and used the threat of back-to-work legislation that hurt the process. Everyone knew that this would be the case this time as well, and therein lies the problem. The union and the company both knew the minister would not miss an occasion to try to grab the spotlight and introduce back-to-work legislation immediately.

The tabling of the legislation was one thing but the signalling of the tabling of the legislation last week is another. I am sure that the execs at CP were out golfing this past weekend because they knew what was going to happen. They knew what was inevitable this week

so they probably had the weekend off. They probably managed to get in 18 or 36 holes.

When this happens it becomes a problem because the government becomes the centre of the dispute and both parties stop negotiating. It is bad for the union, it is bad for the company, it is bad for government and it is bad for the country. Yet this is a new labour relations model for the government. It is one that every expert on both sides of the issue believes is wrong.

I am going to quote George Smith again because ironically, as a former labour relations director for both Air Canada and CP, his opinion should mean something to the government. He has been unique in his perspective on how the government has dealt with both of these disputes. He said repeatedly that the government is worsening employee relations at federal employers by its constant interventions. He wisely said, "You can't legislate peace" and that the government's intervention brings long-term instability and distrust between the employees and employers that are ultimately unpredictable and unproductive.

The mess the government has created in one year of labour relations will take years to undo.

Canadians are reasonable and fair people. We can start to see that Canadians are losing trust in the government. From the F-35 fiasco to the robocall scandal, Canadians are seeing the true colours of the government. The majority reform government is taking off the sheep's clothing. I have a feeling however there are still a few progressive Conservative MPs who are feeling quite uneasy about how the government is abusing its power, whether it is against the poor and vulnerable in our society, against seniors or against the enshrined rights afforded to workers.

With the way the government has treated workers over the last year and the incompetence it has shown in handling labour relations at Canada Post and CP Rail, I cannot with good conscience support the government's legislation. Back-to-work legislation should never be seen as a success. If it represents anything, it represents failure. The action of the government has time and time again been a failure.

● (2410)

If the government even dreams that it is legislating peace and harmony at CP, it had better wake up and apologize to organized labour in our country.

We have seen the results. We have seen two charter challenges. We have seen two court cases. Time after time, the government has made a mess of labour relations.

We will stand with the union on this particular bill. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with the teamsters on the bill and we will vote against this back-to-work legislation.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Madam Chair, I rise this morning, which is after midnight here in Ottawa, to support Bill C-39, An Act to provide for the continuation and resumption of rail service operations.

Government Orders

Each of us is aware that our economy is still recovering from the events of the last several years. We continue to fare better than many others through the global economic downturn, true, but when it comes to our ongoing recovery, we are still not completely out of the woods. In fact, it would be simple arrogance for any country to assume that it is untouchable. In times like these, a disruption in a key industry is a simple ripple that can quickly turn into a tidal wave. The strike at CP Rail is having serious consequences for our economy.

Even while we sit here this morning discussing legislation, it is still our hope that CP Rail and the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, the TCRC, can find a way to settle their differences. As the House knows, according to Transport Canada, CP Rail moves almost \$50 billion worth of freight every year. The House must do what it can to help find a positive solution for everyone involved.

Efficient rail services are essential for us to play a competitive role in the world's economy. Rail brings products from across the country to and from our ports, and from our ports we send goods to locations around the world.

According to Transport Canada, in 2010, CP Rail handled 74% of potash, 57% of wheat, 53% of coal and 39% of containers within Canada. This represents \$5 billion worth of potash, \$11.1 billion worth of grain and \$5.25 billion worth of coal. Clearly, the issue we are discussing here this morning is bigger than us. It is about our place in a worldwide trade network. The railway was once hailed for connecting the country and now it connects us to the world.

I will take this opportunity to bring this back to a company in Brockville in my riding of Leeds—Grenville. It is not just about a company in Brockville. It is about companies across the country that are being impacted with the strike. I will talk specifically about the company in Brockville called Canarm. It is a global marketer and manufacturer of lighting, air moving and related products supplying residential and agricultural markets. The company has five satellite manufacturing plants in Ontario, as well as a distribution centre in Montreal. It is a privately owned company and it has over 300 full-time employees. I heard from the company last week, even before we got into this strike. What the company has been telling me over the last few days is that it is very concerned about what is going on. I will read what they sent me. It says:

On the distribution side of our business we currently have 10 containers, representing \$600,000 in sales on rail with CP and not moving. We have 25 containers in Port in Vancouver which represents \$1,500,000 in sales that cannot move now because of the strike. This product is all seasonal product (ceiling fans) on their way to retailers for summer promotions to Canadian consumers. Every day represents lost sales that we are not able to get back. If the strike progresses too long the retailers will be moving in to fall products and we may be forced to take the product back because it was not delivered on time. We would also be forced to lay off workers at our Montreal distribution facility because of lack of work for them.

Further, we also import component parts from the orient which are assembled in our Brockville manufacturing facility. This product is industrial commercial ventilation equipment used in the construction of condominiums and office buildings. Should the strike continue beyond the 2-3 week mark we would also be looking at layoffs here, which could put up to 75 or 80 people temporarily out of work.

Jim Cooper, the president of Canarm, said:

It is difficult enough to be a successful manufacturer in Canada today without the distraction of a national rail strike. In order to be successful we must have all elements of our supply chain working in sync. This rail strike is extremely disruptive

to our business and we need to see our product moving on the rail as quickly as possible in order to continue to meet and fulfill our obligations to our customers.

The fact is that we need to move as quickly as possible so that we are not having companies like Canarm laying off employees.

● (2415)

As I said before, it is not just about Canarm in Brockville. It is about companies across this country that are relying on supply chain operations and the smooth movement of goods.

Here is the situation as it stands now. I want to reassure the House that the labour program has been involved throughout the process. The TCRC represents 4,200 running trades employees and about 220 rail traffic controllers. Running trades employees include locomotive engineers, conductors, baggagemen, brakemen, car retarder operators, yardmen, switch tenders, yard masters, assistant yard masters and locomotive firemen

Last fall, the TCRC and CP Rail representatives started negotiations for both units. On February 17, 2012, the Minister of Labour received notices of dispute from the employer for both units. About two weeks later, on March 2, the labour program appointed two conciliation officers to help the parties work through the process. The parties were released from conciliation on May 1 and on May 16 and on May 22, the Minister of Labour met with the parties but to no avail. On May 23 of this year a strike began.

The parties have been unable to resolve their differences even with the help from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. That is why our government is proposing Bill C-39. It would end the work stoppage and provide the parties with an interest-based binding arbitration process to help them resolve their conflict.

Today, the world's economies are interconnected. I have already spoken about how this is impacting a company, a major employer, in my riding. Yes, the flow of products and goods is a crucial part of keeping our economy strong, but it is also about keeping the world economy strong.

We are but one link in a global chain. Think about our contribution to the Asia-Pacific gateway and trade corridor. Without rail transport, our link is weak, more than weak. Without rail transport, the chain is broken. Simply put, without rail transport our economy suffers.

Canadians want responsible leadership from their parliamentary representatives. The sooner the bill is passed the sooner Canadian businesses and investors will be reassured. I call on my fellow members to support this bill.

I also have a few questions for the minister.

Government Orders

We have heard from other members. We have heard from the member for Vancouver East and the member for Cape Breton—Canso. I would like to ask the minister to comment on the speeches by those members and how she felt about what they had to say.

• (2420)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Chair, as we are in committee of the whole, I thought perhaps we would talk about some of the clauses that are in the bill. I think if people understood the legislation they would have a clearer image as to what the process is that follows.

In response to the member for Vancouver East, I have actually heard the speech before because I spent 30 hours at the table with the union. Ironically, it is the same thing they said to me at the table that the NDP said this evening here in the House. I wonder as well whether the NDP members took the time and effort, as we did on this side of the House, to consult with all parties on the issue. Did they speak to CPR management on its topics and the matters that pertain to it? That is certainly what we did in the labour program in coming up with the back-to-work legislation and helping them through the collective bargaining process.

With respect to the member for Cape Breton—Canso, I guess that not all experts and not all academics are in agreement with the position that he put forth. I can quote from Ian Lee from Carleton University's School of Business. He said, "What I'm arguing is that the government has intervened because of the huge impact it has, the externality impact it has on other industries, other communities, other workers in other parts of the country that are not a party to collective agreement negotiations. The government is quite rightly saying, 'Look, the people in these communities that are dependent on railroads, the agricultural community and resource-based communities in northern Ontario and western Canada, cannot sustain strikes because it shuts down their ability to make a living'. Parliament and the government of the day is elected to achieve the greater public good. They are weighing, I believe, the greater public good of the damage it may be causing to the particular individual relationship in that company with the union versus the greater public good of the millions and millions of Canadians across Canada who are profoundly affected".

That is why we included clause 8 within the bill which sets out a very fair and balanced means of arbitration for the parties to come to their own decision on their collective agreements in their own time.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Madam Chair, something that I did not get an opportunity to address is the VIA Rail track issue. VIA uses CP tracks between Ottawa and Brockville, which connect Ottawa with Toronto in terms of their service, which is a very important part of their service.

As it sits right now, VIA is not able to use the CP track between Ottawa and Brockville and it is disrupting services which is impacting my riding once again. We all talk about how important rail is to cut down on greenhouse gas emissions. This is just another effect of this strike where passengers are not able to use that particular service.

We all know that we are here debating this bill tonight and expect the possible passage of the restoring rail service act. However, there are some members who argue that we should allow this strike to go on longer. I am sure, from my comments already, members know I

am not one of those. There are also members who believe that we should allow further bargaining between the two parties.

Could the minister please explain the necessity to expedite the passage of this bill and how important it is to the Canadian economy?

• (2425)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Chair, what I can say is that the time to act is now and we must pass this bill as quickly as possible.

We are now entering into day eight of the strike. As such, the economic effects will pile up more and more and the effect on the national economy will become more and more severe. That is exactly why we are sitting here tonight at the time and the hour that we are sitting here, to ensure that we have passage of this bill.

We have explained very clearly what the economic effect is and we have also indicated very clearly that we are acting in the greater good of the Canadian public in ensuring that we pass this legislation and we have the trains rolling again soon.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Madam Chair, we heard from some members across the way who thought it was very important that they were standing up at this hour.

However, I think it is important that I am standing up here at this hour for my constituents and the jobs in my riding, which, as I said before, are representative of jobs across this country and how important they are.

I will take this opportunity to speak a little about the Forest Products Association. The Forest Products Association of Canada wrote to the minister to outline the following:

As most of the industry's mills are located in remote areas where rail service is the only viable transportation mode, other forms of ground transportation are either too costly or unavailable to provide our companies with relief, making our sector particularly vulnerable to even the shortest disruptions in service.

It goes on to say, "In addition, the industry does not have the capacity to stockpile finished product nor can it continue production without certain input materials. As a result, any service disruption will undoubtedly lead to the industry incurring significant costs and will quickly result in mills shutting down temporarily".

Given that we are here debating the passage of the restoring rail service act, it is clear that we need to bring an end to this strike before it can further damage the Canadian economy.

Would the minister explain what effect this work stoppage is having and will have on the fragile economic recovery?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Chair, I thank the member for pointing out the effects on the forest sector. We have the same information.

I know the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Industry, the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Transport have all been contacted by their stakeholders on these very important issues, because it is just indicative of how widespread an effect the rail strike is having on our economy.

Government Orders

In the forest sector, as indicated, there is at least six pulp and paper mills that are captive to CP Rail, four of them are in B.C. and two of them are in Ontario. Of those six mills, it is quite likely that some mills will need to shut down as this progresses, if this is to be a prolonged work stoppage, because they are running out of storage space. In these small resource-based towns, the shutting down of such mills would have a devastating effect on the communities and the workers.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Madam Chair, I have a few more quotes. This one is from the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers of Canada and the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association. They jointly wrote:

CP Rail plays a vital role in the shipment of both parts and components into Ontario vehicle manufacturing facilities, as well as a significant role in the shipment and distribution of finished vehicles from ports of entry to local dealerships across the country.

Their industry is presently experiencing a positive but fragile recovery. Any disruption in CP's rail service will have an immediate and dramatic impact on their collective members and their operations in Canada.

The Western Grain Elevator Association wrote that this work stoppage will have a significant impact on the grain industry. Many of their elevator locations are serviced only by CPR. In the event of a work stoppage, these elevators will have no options available to them in the transportation of grain products. This will lead to the inability to supply international customers and prohibit producers from delivering to those facilities. If this product cannot be moved in a timely way to customers, the associated lost opportunities and added costs will be significant.

Once again my question is for the minister. Could the minister please describe to this House the impact of a rail stoppage on vital industries such as the Western Grain Elevator Association and the automotive industry?

• (2430)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Madam Chair, I can give members some great granularity on the exact effect it is having on the automotive sector. Indeed, CP and we have been informed by both Toyota and Honda that they would be facing plant closures starting tomorrow in Alliston, Woodstock and Cambridge.

These are serious matters. People depend upon those jobs to feed their families and to ensure they can look after their families, their houses and their lives. It is important that we act quickly to ensure the passage of this bill in a fast manner so that we can avoid those kinds of third party unintended consequences from a work stoppage.

The Chair: It being 12:33 a.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the committee stage of the bill.

(On clause 2)

Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

(On clause 3)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

[*English*]

(On clause 4)

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

(On clause 5)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

[*English*]

(On clause 6)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

(On clause 7)

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 7 agreed to)

(On clause 8)

The Chair: Shall clause 8 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 8 agreed to)

(On clause 9)

The Chair: Shall clause 9 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

Government Orders

(Clause 9 agreed to)
 [Translation]
 (On clause 10)
The Chair: Shall clause 10 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 10 agreed to)
 [English]
 (On clause 11)
The Chair: Shall clause 11 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 11 agreed to)
 [Translation]
 (On clause 12)
The Chair: Shall clause 12 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 12 agreed to)
 [English]
 (On clause 13)
The Chair: Shall clause 13 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 13 agreed to)
 [Translation]
 (On clause 14)
The Chair: Shall clause 14 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 14 agreed to)
 [English]
 (On clause 15)
The Chair: Shall clause 15 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 15 agreed to)
 (On clause 16)
The Chair: Shall clause 16 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 16 agreed to)
 (On clause 17)
The Chair: Shall clause 17 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 17 agreed to)
 (On clause 18)
The Chair: Shall clause 18 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 18 agreed to)
 (On clause 1)
The Deputy Speaker: Shall Clause 1 carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Clause 1 agreed to)
The Deputy Speaker: Shall the title carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Title agreed to)
 [Translation]
The Chair: Shall the bill carry?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: On division.
 (Bill agreed to)
 [English]
The Deputy Speaker: Shall I rise and report the bill to this House?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker, the committee of the whole has considered Bill C-39 and has directed me to report the same, without amendment.
 (Bill reported)
 • (2435)
Hon. Lisa Raitt moved that the bill be concurred in.
The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?
Some hon. members: Agreed.
Some hon. members: No.
The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.
Some hon. members: Yea.
The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I ask that we proceed immediately with the vote.

• (2440)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 232*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliver	Opitz

Paradis
 Penashue
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Tilson
 Toews
 Trottier
 Tweed
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country
 Weston (Saint John)
 Williamson
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)

Government Orders

Payne
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Rathgeber
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Seeback
 Shipley
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Toet
 Trost
 Truppe
 Uppal
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

 Wilks
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer— 160

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
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 (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo

Government Orders

Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel
Valeriotte — 139	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

● (2445)

Hon. Lisa Raitt moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

She said: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of compelling reasons to end the strike at Canadian Pacific Rail. Count among them the fact that the company employs roughly 15,000 employees and only about a quarter of them are members of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference who are currently on strike. That means the majority of the company's employees are being affected.

It is important that members of the House are aware that the annual average earnings in the rail business, at more than \$79,000 a year are among the highest in Canadian industry. These are good jobs. With the CP Rail system shut down, a significant number of workers, and a lot of money as a result, will be taken out of the economy.

There are 1,100 Canadian communities that are served by CP, which operates in six Canadian provinces as well as thirteen U.S. states. The company's rail and intermodal transportation services provide a network covering 22,000 kilometres. CP Rail serves all the principal business centres across Canada, from Montreal to Vancouver, and has direct links to eight major ports, extending essentially its reach to every corner of the globe. The railway also feeds directly into the U.S. heartland.

The company transports bulk commodities, merchandise, freight and intermodal traffic. On the bulk side these commodities include grain, coal, sulphur, fertilizers. Merchandise freight consists of finished vehicles and automotive parts as well as forest, industrial and consumer products. Intermodal traffic consists mostly of high-value, time-sensitive retail goods in containers that can be transported by train, ship and by truck. In short, CP ships a large portion of everything that Canadians harvest or manufacture.

Factor in the value of freight moved by CP rail in Canada each year, which is just shy of \$50 billion annually.

The sectors that use rail transport contribute significantly to our economy. A 2009 report prepared by the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management estimated that four key Canadian industries, oilseed and grain farming, coal mining, wood products manufacturing and pulp and paper and paper products manufacturing, contributed over \$81 billion to Canada's GDP each year. Equally noteworthy, these four sectors account for close to one million jobs, jobs of Canadians all across the country that are being adversely affected by this work stoppage.

My colleagues in the House are certainly aware that a major disruption in Canadian railway operations can have great consequences on various sectors of the economy, and we have talked about those very much in the last three days. I have just illustrated how important CP rail services are to the Canadian economy.

It is never the government's first choice to proceed with back-to-work legislation and it is not something that I take lightly. I really had hoped that we would be able to avoid a work stoppage and avoid introducing legislation. However, there are no other options left to consider without causing irreparable damage to the economy and the economic recovery. It is necessary for the government to act decisively and to do it quickly.

Canadians want the government to protect our national interests in a period of ongoing economic uncertainty. Canadians expect it and we are obliged to act.

While Canada's economic performance remains strong relative to many other industrialized countries, the current global recovery is fragile. As stakeholders involved in the 2011 rail freight service review panel noted, Canada's international reputation as a reliable supplier suffers as a result of these disruptions. In today's highly competitive marketplace that can quickly lead to lost clients and lost markets.

The review panel also heard that rail labour issues were disruptive to the flow of goods in the logistic chain. That is because rail-based logistic systems involve a range of stakeholders, including shippers, railways, terminal operators, transloaders and ports. Problems incurred by any one of the players causes system congestion and it can take weeks for operations to recover afterward. This is precisely the situation we are facing today in day eight of an ongoing rail strike.

● (2450)

Canada's rail system in general does not have the capacity to pick up any slack from a CP Rail work stoppage. I want to remind the House that there are only two Canadian class I freight railways. One is CP Rail and the other is Canadian National Railway, or CN. Roughly 20% of CP traffic does not have direct access to CN's network and CN is already operating at full speed at any rate. At best it can only absorb a very small percentage of the additional load. More to the point, CP Rail and CN have an agreement whereby CP operates all trains of both railways from the Fraser Canyon to the south shore of the Port Metro Vancouver. Therefore, the CP Rail strike is affecting the flow of goods going into and coming out of the Port Metro Vancouver and CN's activities as well.

Government Orders

VIA Rail simply cannot help. It is designed to transport passengers, not freight. Therefore, we can see there are no other options and the economy can only be protected by the quick passage of this legislation.

Contrary to assertions from the opposite side, we have done our utmost best to avoid this situation. The government has worked hard and we have provided assistance to the parties to prevent this work stoppage. From the outset, I encouraged all parties to reach agreements through the negotiation process.

CP and Teamsters started negotiating in October and November 2011. They represent 4,200 running trade employees and 220 rail traffic controllers with full collective agreements expiring December 31, 2011.

By mid-February of this year, I received notices of dispute from the employer for both units. To try to break the impasse, the labour program provided the parties with the services of two conciliation officers for both of the union's bargaining units. Having the same conciliation officers for both units helped to ensure consistency in the process.

In spite of the efforts of the conciliators, who had many years of experience both on management side and on the union side, they could not help the parties find common ground. Things did not progress to a negotiated settlement and, as such, in accordance with the Canada Labour Code, they were released from conciliation on May 1.

On May 16 and May 22, I met with the parties myself but to no avail. On May 23 the strike started.

Labour officials worked with the parties for the first five days of the strike to try to reach a settlement or to try to find a voluntary arbitration process for the parties, but the parties rejected outright the compromise position that labour officials provided to them. As a result, labour officials withdrew their services because the impasse was great and the parties were entrenched in their positions and there was no prospect for a deal or a voluntary arbitration agreement.

I tried to give hon. members a quick rundown on events that took place over the span of eight months. However, the situation we are now facing, despite assistance provided on a massive scale to the parties, is one in which we have a strike affecting the national economy. We have tried diligently to avoid any disruption in railway transportation and its consequences for Canadian producers and manufacturers whose economic survival depends on this mode of transportation.

As I mentioned, I met with both parties on two separate occasions in the weeks leading up to the strike for over a period of about 30 hours. I acknowledge their efforts in attempting to achieve a resolution through their respective differences, but I was firm in my expectation that the parties were to do everything in their power to reach a deal of their volition. It is the responsibility of the parties for their own labour relations and it is the responsibility of the parties to conclude a collective agreement.

I ensured that the parties were aware of the serious concerns I had about the economic damage that would be inflicted on the Canadian business and agriculture sectors as a result of a possible work

stoppage. I offered the parties an extended mediation period and asked them to continue to bargain and make every effort to achieve an agreement. My officials offered a compromise position.

I wanted to avoid the need for legislative intervention on the part of the government. Unfortunately, the parties failed to reach an agreement on either content or on process. Therefore, we are left with no choice but to assume our responsibility to the Canadian public and bring this dispute to a conclusion.

For all the reasons I have already outlined, this government is committed to doing what it takes to protect the public interest. The federal government has introduced back-to-work legislation in the railway industry in governments on eight occasions since 1950. We do not want nor can Canada afford to allow the strike to continue, especially at a time when the global economy remains in a precarious state.

I urge all members to swiftly pass the bill to get CP trains rolling again and enable the Canadian economy to continue to create jobs for the benefit of all Canadians.

• (2455)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would say that I hope historians take particular note, when they are reviewing this period of Canadian history, and factor in the implications of a government that is prepared to turn the whole House of Commons upside down, run roughshod over workers' rights and questionably violate the rights workers have under the charter, all in the interest of making sure the trains run on time. Historians should note that the minister shouted "hear, hear" on that comment. It must be late. Not many got that reference, but they ought to think about the fact that this is all about making the trains run on time. That is the priority.

The minister mentioned the amount of legislation that has been used, but since 1950 this kind of legislation has been used, on average, once every two years. The Conservatives have done it four times in the first year. Four times in the first year they have already brought in back-to-work legislation, denying workers their right to stand up and fight for their rights in a democratic fashion, exercising those charter rights.

What is interesting is what the government did not do in terms of bringing in back-to-work legislation. The government allowed in my home town, for instance, U.S. Steel to buy Stelco. Supposedly, the government found there was some net benefit to Canada, and yet not long after it bought Stelco and entered into negotiations, U.S. Steel did not like the way the negotiations were going and locked the workers out. We implored the government to step in and do something. If it wanted to bring in back-to-work legislation, we wanted it to bring that legislation in and put those Hamiltonians back to work, who did absolutely nothing wrong. They were locked out and, as a result, their pensions have been gutted and they have lost rights. That is the track record of the government in terms of workers' rights and workers' right to bargain collectively.

Government Orders

If we listen to the government, the union is so evil. It wanted so much, was greedy and selfish. That is the implication. I see the minister shaking her head no, no, no. Yet her colleagues are quite willing to throw around “union bosses” at a drop of a hat. Nobody is fooled by any of that. What is the strike really about? It is about pension rights. Is there a Canadian right now who is not frightened and worried about pension rights and willing to do anything, including standing up and fighting and exercising his or her right to strike?

Two of the issues are fatigue management and rail safety. How many derailments have there been in the last while? Rail safety is an issue, and a lot of changes have been advantageous to the railways. When the railways are unsafe, just like when classrooms are dirty, which is not just where people work but where children learn, public safety is at risk when there are fatigue issues in terms of the people who are running those trains. Why is that so wrong?

One of the last items was work rules. Trying to get fairness in terms of rules at work ought not to be seen as some kind of revolutionary tactic that brings down the weight of the entire federal government on people's heads because they want to have some decent and fair work rules.

Those are the three main issues. Why are they not mentioned by the government? Why does the government not have some sympathy for the workers who stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars in pensionable income and earning income in the ensuing years? Why has anybody not talked about that over there? Why has anyone over there not talked about managing fatigue as a public safety issue? Conservatives rant and rave about law and order and public safety. This is just as much a public safety issue as any other that the justice minister may bring forward. Yet the government wants to run roughshod over that, too.

● (2500)

Ten hours after the strike began, the government sent out a signal that it was prepared, if necessary, to step in with back-to-work legislation.

We do not need to have years at the bargaining table to guess what happened at that point. The negotiations broke down. The company is sitting at the table with its workers saying that it wants to negotiate a fair agreement but then it gets some help from its big buddy in Ottawa who says, “Hey, don't worry. If it doesn't go well we'll just order them all back to work.” Well, at that point bargaining is done. It is over. It is dead.

No one should be surprised that is what happened because that is what the government wanted to happen. Every employer in this country right now believes that they have a friend in the government, particularly when it comes to going after their own employees. Why? Because they can make more profit if they take away people's wages. That would be a fair trade-off as far as the government is concerned.

We have already heard that it is a profitable private corporation engaged in fair collective bargaining and after 10 hours the government effectively killed bargaining at that table. The government is responsible for where we are today, not the union. The current government brought us to where we are today.

It is interesting to mention that the government, from time to time, when it is necessary, will say things like, “We respect collective bargaining”. Sometimes it even goes so far as to recognize that it is a right that Canadians have. Canadians have that right because the Supreme Court has ruled that the charter provides that protection. What the government cannot stand is not Canadians who have rights, it is Canadians who would dare to stand up and demand those rights. That is what the current government cannot stand.

In my last two minutes I will mention that the official opposition, under the leadership of the member for Outremont, was here in this place every time the government attacked workers, and today is no different. We will continue to stand up and fight for the rights of Canadians to have a decent income, especially when it is a profit-making corporation, and to have decent pensions that they can count on. This business of taking people's pension rights away, sometimes just a few years before they are about to retire, is disgraceful. It is disgraceful to do that to Canadians.

However, we ought not be surprised. We just need to look at what the government did with OAS. The Prime Minister said, “Oh, we won't touch pensions. We'll just kind of kill them a little bit.” And somehow that is okay.

The fact that pensions were on the bargaining table to be negotiated is something the government would see as almost evil. How dare anyone go against the government when it is trying to lower pensions. Anyone in Canada who has any other ideas, except its buddies over there, had better forget about it because, if necessary, look where we are, one o'clock in the morning and we are ramming through back-to-work legislation so that the government can do the bidding of the people who called upon it to do it. In every one of those cases where the government ordered workers back to work, that is what the corporation wanted.

In the case of U.S. Steel, the corporation wanted those workers outside because it locked them out. We sure were not standing here at one o'clock in the morning debating legislation to order them back to work. It is not going to happen because the corporations are setting the agenda and Canadians are beginning to catch on as to who will pay the price at the end of the day.

If it takes until one o'clock in the morning, three o'clock in the morning, five o'clock in the morning or 24/7 standing beside workers and defending their rights to free collective bargaining, then Canadians can count on the fact that the NDP, the official opposition in Ottawa, will be there and will take on the government every time.

● (2505)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves once again, as a House, debating a question of back-to-work legislation. It has become an extraordinary habit on the part of the government.

I want to try to talk to the House, if I may, from a perspective that is different from the perspective we have heard either from the government or the official opposition, and I know there will be a lot of heckling and other things.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

We all recognize that there is public interest in both senses of the word. There is a public interest in the negotiation and discussion process between the workers and the employers. We decided that, in our economic system, we would let the parties make every effort to find solutions to their problems. We recognize the importance of these rights, whether it be at the federal or the provincial level.

It is also important to note that the Supreme Court of Canada also recognized the importance of the process, the importance of negotiations, the importance of making an effort to find solutions and the fundamental importance of recognizing that, in a democratic society, workers and employers will have differences of opinion from time to time and that, yes, there will be strikes.

We do not want a strike. We do not want any disruptions to the economy. We recognize that this is difficult for the economy, workers and employers. However, the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship is that people have these rights and we recognize that it may cause inconveniences when workers or employers exercise their economic and social rights. That is the law in Canada. That is the social situation in Canada.

[*English*]

We also recognize on our side of the House, and I am sure there are some members, at least in the New Democratic Party, who understand it because of their involvement in various governments at the provincial level, that there is also a public interest in the economy and a public interest in ensuring that at critical times the public interest must be maintained. Therefore, yes, as the minister has said, from time to time governments have introduced back-to-work legislation of various kinds.

I have to say to the minister that the back-to-work legislation she has introduced on previous occasions, and the way in which she has exercised her discretion with respect to the appointment of arbitrators, has shown a bias toward employers and a bias toward simply exercising an authoritarian practice by the government, which is shameful.

It is also the case that when the collective bargaining is still going on and people are still at the table and the minister ventures out to the microphones and says if the parties are not able to reach an agreement very quickly the government will be ordering them back to work, we all have to understand what that does to the balance of the discussion. What that does is this. If an employer knows that the government is going to be there ordering people back to work, not at the end of the day but at the end of the hour, there is no incentive on the part of the employer to reach an agreement. That is the problem we have with the approach that has been taken.

My colleague from Leeds—Grenville spoke in the House, and I appreciated his comments very much and the comments the minister has made where the formula is this: the economy is fragile, the economy is interconnected, it is our competitiveness that is at stake, we simply have to intervene, we have no choice. If that is the case, before the other side applauds, why even pretend there is such a thing as collective bargaining? Why even pretend there is such a thing as a right to withdraw labour? Why even pretend there are in fact democratic rights that do from time to time create an

inconvenience? Why not just abandon the whole process and set up an authoritarian structure where the government and the employers get together and establish what the pension rules are going to be, establish what the wage rates are going to be and forget about the democratic rights of the people who are working for a living?

● (2510)

That is the problem with what we see coming from the government. We do not deny for a moment that the government has an economic responsibility. What we deny is the competence of the government. What we deny is the fairness of the government. What we deny is the sense of balance of the government. That is why we will be voting against this legislation and the way in which its power has been exercised.

There is a very serious issue which is now raised by the rhetoric of the minister and raised by the minister and members who were speaking in favour of this legislation. It is the same issue that we had with respect to the Canada Post legislation, it is the same issue that we had with respect to Air Canada, and the way in which it has exercised its discretion to appoint arbitrators and the way in which it has exercised its discretion to intervene.

That is, what is the future of labour relations in the federal jurisdiction in this country, if at every moment and at every time that workers exercise their rights to defend their pensions, to defend their job security, to defend their health and safety, the government is there telling the employer, “Do not worry, we are on your side. We are not on the side of the workers. We are going to be making sure that people get back to work right away”?

All sense of balance is lost. At the end of the day, what really matters in this House and what really matters with respect to legislation is this critical sense of balance. We in the Liberal Party of Canada do not deny for a moment that of course there are times when governments have to intervene. We recognize that. We have done it. We have seen it. We have been there.

It is not a question of “Do we have the right to intervene?” It is a question of “How do we intervene, what is the sensitivity with which we intervene, what is the balance that is struck when we intervene, and how do we ensure that the work of the employer, the work of the workers, both sides are respected and both sides are taken?”

I do not think there is disgrace in the fact that CP Rail makes a profit. It is a good thing that CP Rail makes a profit. The question is not whether it is a profitable company or a private company, the question is, “Do we have a government, today, that is prepared to recognize the need for balance, the need for fairness, and, yes, the need for justice, as well as the needs of the economy?”

Right now we do not have that government. That is the reason the Liberal Party will be voting against this legislation.

The Speaker: It being 1:14 a.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I ask that we proceed immediately with the vote.

• (2520)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 233*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hillyer	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MackKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie

McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliver	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Penashue	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 157	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogoué
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	Mai
Marston	Martin

Government Orders

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)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Quach	Rae
Rafferty	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	St-Denis
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Stoffer
Sitsabaiesan	Thibeault
Stewart	Tremblay
Sullivan	Turmel
Toone	
Trudeau	
Valeriote — 139	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the member for Ottawa—Orléans came into the House after you began talking about the motion. I would like you to confirm that his vote has not been recorded.

[*English*]

The Speaker: As I recall it, the member had taken his seat before I had started. I can review the video, but I did see him sit down before I actually started reading the question.

The hon. government House leader is rising.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one very important piece of business. I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: This House stands adjourned until later this day at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:26 a.m.)

CONTENTS

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Restoring Rail Service Act

		(Clause 4 agreed to).....	8547
		(On clause 5).....	8547
		(Clause 5 agreed to).....	8547
		(On clause 6).....	8547
		(Clause 6 agreed to).....	8547
		(On clause 7).....	8547
		(Clause 7 agreed to).....	8547
		(On clause 8).....	8547
		(Clause 8 agreed to).....	8547
		(On clause 9).....	8547
		(Clause 9 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 10).....	8548
		(Clause 10 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 11).....	8548
		(Clause 11 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 12).....	8548
		(Clause 12 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 13).....	8548
		(Clause 13 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 14).....	8548
		(Clause 14 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 15).....	8548
		(Clause 15 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 16).....	8548
		(Clause 16 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 17).....	8548
		(Clause 17 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 18).....	8548
		(Clause 18 agreed to).....	8548
		(On clause 1).....	8548
		(Clause 1 agreed to).....	8548
		(Title agreed to).....	8548
		(Bill agreed to).....	8548
		(Bill reported).....	8548
		Ms. Raitt.....	8548
		Motion for concurrence.....	8548
		Mr. O'Connor.....	8549
		Motion agreed to on division.....	8550
		Ms. Raitt.....	8550
		Third reading.....	8550
		Mr. Christopherson.....	8551
		Mr. Rae.....	8552
		Motion agreed to.....	8555
		(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)	8555
		Mr. Van Loan.....	8555
		Motion.....	8555
		(Motion agreed to).....	8555
Ms. Raitt.....	8521		
Bill C-39. Second reading.....	8521		
Mr. Boulerice.....	8523		
Mr. Cuzner.....	8523		
Mr. Hawn.....	8523		
Mr. Giguère.....	8524		
Mr. Valeriotte.....	8524		
Mr. Boulerice.....	8524		
Mr. Gourde.....	8527		
Mr. Cuzner.....	8527		
Mr. Bellavance.....	8527		
Mr. Rousseau.....	8528		
Ms. Brown (Newmarket—Aurora).....	8528		
Mr. Karygiannis.....	8528		
Mr. Woodworth.....	8530		
Mrs. Day.....	8530		
Mr. Cuzner.....	8531		
Ms. Fry.....	8531		
Mr. Albrecht.....	8532		
Mr. Nantel.....	8532		
Mr. Cuzner.....	8532		
Mr. Zimmer.....	8533		
Ms. Leitch.....	8533		
Mr. Morin (Laurentides—Labelle).....	8533		
Mrs. Hughes.....	8534		
Mr. McGuinty.....	8535		
Ms. May.....	8535		
Mr. Gourde.....	8535		
Mr. Giguère.....	8536		
Mr. Coderre.....	8536		
Mrs. Hughes.....	8537		
Motion agreed to.....	8539		
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, the House went into committee thereon, Denise Savoie in the chair.).....	8539		
(On Clause 2).....	8540		
Ms. Raitt.....	8540		
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East).....	8541		
Mr. Cuzner.....	8543		
Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville).....	8544		
(On clause 2).....	8547		
(Clause 2 agreed to).....	8547		
(On clause 3).....	8547		
(Clause 3 agreed to).....	8547		
(On clause 4).....	8547		

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:

Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

En cas de non-livraison,

retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
<http://publications.gc.ca>

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
<http://publications.gc.ca>

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>