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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 27, 2006

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

JUVENILE ARTHRITIS

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight the story of Samantha Whiteside. Samantha was diagnosed with juvenile arthritis at the age of two, yet in spite of a very challenging early childhood, Sam has persevered.

Fourteen years of rehabilitation later and despite overwhelming odds, Sam set out to become the fastest woman to cross Lake Ontario. Sam did not swim across Lake Ontario simply to put her name in the record books, but to achieve a far more noble purpose: to raise awareness and money for juvenile arthritis research.

I was there on August 8. I watched her swim from Niagara-on-the-Lake to Toronto in 15 hours and 11 minutes, a journey of 52 kilometres, most of those hours in the dark. She raised over \$20,000 for juvenile arthritis research.

We all salute Samantha Whiteside. She is an inspiration to all of us. Her perseverance, personal sacrifice and dedication to a very worthy cause make every one of us proud.

Kitchener—Conestoga is home to a Canadian national hero, and we say way to go, Sam.

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[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cuts announced at the beginning of the week confirm that the

Conservative government is playing favourites with the interests of Canadians.

The current government has let down Toronto museums and cultural centres that need these funds.

Although it is forecasting a \$13 billion surplus, the government has cut \$45 million from the budget of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, supposedly for reasons of efficiency.

Who will be affected by these cuts made in the name of efficiency? Will it be our senior citizens or disabled who benefit from CMHC programs, or will it be the first nations? We do not know because the government acted unilaterally.

It is too late for the CMHC to recoup the funds cut, but I urge the (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development to do her duty and to stand up to her superiors to save the Supporting Communities Partnerships Initiative.

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HEALTH

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a study of the mortality rate among women who received cosmetic breast implants between 1974 and 1989 indicates that the suicide rate among these women is 75% higher than in the general population.

In light of this alarming statistic, does the Minister of Health still intend to support the use of cosmetic breast implants by approving the licence applications of Mentor and Inamed even though these companies withheld information from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration?

The Special Access Program, available only for particular situations, approved silicone gel implants for cosmetic surgery in 65% of the cases. This is unacceptable.

The minister must implement the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health, tighten the rules of the Special Access Program, and put on hold his decision to approve the licences.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

CAROL MCGREGOR

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my friend and long-time colleague Carol McGregor passed away last Saturday in Toronto after a brief struggle with cancer.

Statements by Members

Carol was courageous throughout her life. As an advocate for human rights, especially people with disabilities, she knew how to organize support and make the powerful very uncomfortable. That is why I believe Carol McGregor would have been furious with the cuts announced by the government on Tuesday.

Some find it easy to dismiss the cuts as small, with \$1 billion out of \$210 billion in federal spending, cuts already decided on by the Liberals. However, these cuts were made with no consultation or debate except with a Chicago consulting firm at a cost of \$24 million. What arrogance.

These cuts represent huge chunks of already meagre budgets and hurt the most vulnerable people. They are not fat to be trimmed.

We owe Carol McGregor a debt of thanks. Given the cuts this week, we certainly have to rededicate ourselves to continue her struggle.

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AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with a finger in the wind and his head in the sand, the member for Markham—Unionville announced that his Liberals want to one-up the NDP call to withdraw our troops from Afghanistan by pulling out reconstruction teams too. In a rush to see who cuts and runs faster, he is hoping Canadians forget he was in cabinet sending our troops to Kandahar and as defence minister oversaw our mission.

Worse, the former prime minister was in cabinet when his Liberals sent our troops to Afghanistan. As prime minister he sent them to Kandahar, but recently Mr. Dithers went to New York to hobnob, too busy to show up for a vote on extending the mission and too busy to show up for President Karzai's speech, but not too busy to criticize from the shadows the mission he started.

A Liberal pullout is not a big surprise. After all, they pulled out half their caucus before President Karzai's speech last week. The Liberals cut on Afghanistan before its president could ask for more of our support.

Liberals can run, but this government will stay firm in our commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Status of Women Canada is the federal government agency that promotes women's equality and the full participation of women in economic, social, cultural and political life.

On the other end of the spectrum is REAL Women of Canada, a socially conservative group with close ties to the minority government and the Prime Minister, ties that go back as far as the Reform Party.

REAL Women of Canada exists to oppose women's equality and is against women's full participation and equal rights. It does not represent the views of the majority of women in this country.

On Monday the minority Conservative government slashed the Status of Women's operating budget in half. Coincidentally and not

surprisingly, REAL Women of Canada mounted a campaign over the summer to cut funding to the Status of Women.

The minority Conservative government claims that it consulted with Canadians before announcing \$1 billion in cuts. We now know exactly which Canadians they consulted: those and only those who already share its narrow, socially conservative views.

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[Translation]

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Eastern Ontario Development Program, which was announced this summer, is very important for my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. This initiative consists in a \$10 million contribution for a program to alleviate the socio-economic problems in the rural regions of Eastern Ontario. The money is used to support economic and community development, small business development and job creation. This money is essential for funding and developing small and medium enterprises in the riding.

We have worked hard to guarantee that this program receives the budget it needs and by providing this funding, our government is showing the importance it places on local industries. We know the assets Eastern Ontario has to offer and I can assure the people in my riding that I will work tirelessly with my colleagues in order to see that we make the most of them.

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● (1410)

JOURNAL LE NORD

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago in the beautiful riding of Rivière-du-Nord, a newspaper took root that was just as audacious as its founders. Over the years it has witnessed the events that have given our community its identity and, through it all, the *Annonceur*, which became the *Journal Le Nord*, has been punctuated with success.

Its creators were passionate about delivering news that is fair, straightforward and respectful of the readers, which made this paper a leader in the information industry. It has stood out for its great independence and journalistic rigour.

I commend the extraordinary work of the president and editor, François Laferrrière, and the assistant editor and director of information, Mychel Lapointe. I also want to acknowledge the tremendous contribution of the collaborators who simply want to offer their many readers a top notch newspaper that is accessible and to ensure that this wonderful relationship they have had with the public over the past 20 years is a lasting relationship.

My colleagues at the Bloc Québécois join with me in wishing a happy 20th anniversary and long life to the *Journal Le Nord*.

[English]

FERN NIBLOCK

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, early this week Kamloops lost a volunteer extraordinaire. She will be sadly missed. Fern Niblock grew up right here in Ottawa, but shortly after marrying her husband John, an RCMP officer, they moved west and eventually settled in Kamloops.

Fern was a loving mother to her three daughters, Jackie, Rachel and Jeanne, and she doted on her grandchildren, Sara-Jane, Anthony and Hanna.

Even with her hectic schedule, Fern always found time to devote to the Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo constituency association. During an election, there was just no stopping her. Whatever needed to be done, Fern was already there and doing it.

Fern remained a devoted Canadian to the end. She requested that in lieu of flowers donations be made to the Western Canada Theatre Company or the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra, two more organizations she fully supported.

Fern Niblock was a personal friend and a community asset. Fern will be missed but never forgotten.

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the uncaring Tories might not listen to what we on this side say about their program cutting and community gutting, but I ask them to adjust their earpieces and hear what my constituents are saying.

From a literacy activist in Cartwright, “I am very upset to learn about the decision...to cut spending on literacy. Words cannot express the detrimental effect this will have on our residents...Once again, we in the Atlantic provinces are left to flounder on our own”.

From the Labrador West Status of Women Council, “We clearly have a Government...that not only does not value women's equality, but seems to have a fundamental belief that they can do whatever they want, to destroy what women have worked so hard to gain”.

From a provincial literacy group, “The literacy community is virtually in shock!”

Liberals warned and Canadians now know that the neo-conservatives would gut social programs. The President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance have proved that we were right.

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[Translation]

THE HON. MEMBER FOR SAINT-LAURENT— CARTIERVILLE

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the statements made by the Liberal leadership candidate and former Minister of the Environment are confusing and bothersome for Canadians.

In July, he said, “Canada cannot meet its Kyoto targets” and that Canada's targets for Kyoto were unattainable. In the same breath, he

Statements by Members

added that the former Prime Minister “had only proposed these stringent targets to trump the Americans”.

Then, in August, the candidate flip-flopped and told *The Globe and Mail* that Canada can meet its targets. One thing one day and the opposite the next. Who are we to believe? The candidate from July or from August?

With all this rhetoric, contradiction and flip-flopping, one thing is certain: under the Liberals, we saw 13 years of inaction during which our greenhouse gas emissions increased not by 10, 20, 25 or 30%, but by 35%

Fortunately, in January, Canadians replaced the Liberal spin doctors with a new Conservative government, which sets the record straight for Canadians.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government made cuts without any debate, without any consultation.

More than 12 programs essential to the development of francophone and Acadian communities will be seriously affected, including programs for literacy and court challenges.

This is quite a shock for all minority communities.

What about Bill S-3, which was supported by the Conservatives at the time and aimed to strengthen the government's obligation to respect and promote the Official Languages Act?

And what about the 29 unresolved complaints?

The Conservative government has placed minority communities at the bottom of its agenda.

The NDP and the organizations affected by these cuts demand explanations and immediate action to re-establish funding for the survival of these programs and our francophone communities.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 26, articles in two Saskatchewan newspapers described the horrendous, black mould infested and overcrowded housing conditions in first nations communities in my riding.

Chiefs from those reserves are in Ottawa today demanding action from this novice government. The chiefs' stories of terrible living conditions reveal great suffering. The mother of one of the chiefs recently passed away, succumbing to black mould that was literally growing in her lungs. This is totally unacceptable.

Oral Questions

Improved housing conditions and road access to these remote communities are key to a better quality of life. The Indian affairs minister clearly does not understand that he should advocate for my people. Instead, he has killed the Kelowna accord, opposed the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous people and now has overseen millions of dollars in cuts to aboriginal people, money intended for those most in need.

This novice government has had plenty of time and opportunity to address these issues, but has chosen to abandon Canada's aboriginal people.

I think the minister should pack his silk tie and cufflinks, and spend a month on the reserve in one of my communities to know what this is all about.

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[*Translation*]**MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, about two weeks ago, a hundred textile workers in my riding were temporarily laid off. This morning, we learned that a plant was closing, with the loss of 200 jobs.

We all know that the former government did nothing to protect jobs in the textile industry. The current government is refusing to do anything, such as apply safeguards.

Manufacturing jobs are rapidly disappearing all over Quebec. The government must put programs in place immediately to help workers who are losing their jobs.

Given that this sector is clearly in crisis, is the government telling workers that it still has no solution to offer them, that it has no interest in their future and that it has no programs for them?

* * *

[*English*]**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Tory federal government is poison for the city of Summerside, P.E.I.

In 1989 the last Mulroney government closed CFB Summerside, the only military base in the province of P.E.I.

Now this rapidly aging minority Tory government is closing the GST rebate program which is delivered out of the tax centre in Summerside, a tax centre that the province, the city and all Islanders fought to get as an offset in lieu of the military base.

This unnecessary cut will eliminate 60 permanent jobs, 30 term jobs and 50 casual jobs. It will be a heavy blow for the families and the economy of P.E.I.

In addition, members of the tourist industry from Victoria, B.C. to St. John's, Newfoundland are decrying the elimination of the program, saying it is a critical blow to the industry already suffering a severe downturn. This was a decision made with absolutely no consultation with the provinces or the industry.

The president of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Randy Williams, said, "This is a more serious blow to the industry than 9/11 and could result in bankruptcies for tourism businesses in Canada".

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the previous Liberal government farmers in my riding suffered through years of neglect and disastrous Liberal policies.

We can imagine the surprise of farmers two days ago when the Liberals suddenly announced they have a plan for agriculture. Where was support for farmers when Liberals were in power?

In 2005 the member for Malpeque was the parliamentary secretary to the agriculture minister. What was his plan for farmers?

In a report on farm income last year, the member for Malpeque recommended exactly none of the solutions he calls for so loudly today. It is Canada's new government that is standing up for farmers.

We promised an additional \$500 million. We delivered \$1.5 billion. We promised a better inventory evaluation method. We not only delivered, we made that change retroactive.

The member for Malpeque and the Liberal Party had their chance. Unfortunately they failed farmers miserably for 13 long years. Canada's new government is standing up for and will keep delivering for farmers.

ORAL QUESTIONS[*Translation*]**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Official Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister treated us yet again to Conservative twaddle about how his cuts will not affect minorities.

Today, the president of the Canadian Bar Association said that the court challenges program is often the only way for the vulnerable and underprivileged to be treated fairly.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, among other things, he has just cut an opportunity for our minority francophone communities to seek justice in the Supreme Court? Let him explain that to the Acadians.

● (1420)

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear that none of the cuts affect the Official Languages Act.

This government supported that important legislation. The truth is that the government is under no obligation to pay lawyers to support the Official Languages Act because the government itself will do so.
[English]

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Official Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perpetual hyperbole and bluster no longer fool the House or Canadians.

The Prime Minister's assertion in the House yesterday that the government is not cutting funding to immigrant youth is simply not true. The court challenges program for visible minorities is gone. Workplace programs for disadvantaged youth are gone. Reading and writing programs for refugee kids are toast.

Why did the Prime Minister not at least admit the facts? Why were programs for visible minority youth cut in such a meanspirited way? I use that term not only in its parliamentary sense, but in the sense that every common Canadian would understand.

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition never lets the facts get in the way of a good argument. The Leader of the Opposition had already written his supplementary before he even rose in the House to ask the first question. Let us look at the facts.

We are looking at spending to see if it meets the priorities of the people of Canada. This year we are putting \$100 million more toward helping families with a child with a disability. This year we are spending some \$450 million to provide clean drinking water to our first nations, something that the previous government after 13 years still could not do.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Official Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. The youth employment strategy specifically targets visible minorities for help. Cutting it is a direct assault on the finest values of our society.

The Conservative government is undermining programs for equality. It is undercutting access to the courts for minorities, access to reading and writing help, and access to housing and job skills.

In the name of decency, in the name of compassion, how can the Prime Minister be so incredibly harsh and ultimately so short-sighted for Canadian society?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, nothing could be further from the truth. This government has not made any reductions with respect to summer employment programs for disadvantaged youth. That is something that was specifically exempt from the cuts.

I say to the member opposite that we are looking at reallocations for the budget. The member voted against our budget. He voted against providing hundreds of millions of dollars more for clean drinking water. The member voted against spending \$52 million a year for a strategy on cancer control. The member voted against every single good initiative contained in our budget and he is going to have to defend that at the next election.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minority Conservative government cut blindly on the basis of its ideology rather than the merits of the programs.

Oral Questions

In the past, the Prime Minister called the regional economic development programs corporate welfare. Not only is there no new money for Economic Development Canada, its budget has been slashed and some programs have been cut.

Now that it is clear his Marshall plan has fallen through, can the minister explain why he has so little influence on the Prime Minister, not to mention his failure as the minister responsible for this issue?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud of our record. In its last budget, this government managed taxpayer dollars responsibly. We put money back in Canadians' pockets. We lowered the GST and reduced income and corporate taxes. My colleague did not support a single one of these fiscal measures. She voted against the last budget. She should be ashamed.

* * *

• (1425)

TAXATION

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have learned that the Prime Minister is going back on his promise to Quebec and the other provinces on the fiscal imbalance. The Prime Minister irresponsibly created expectations that he now cannot meet.

For a second time, he is breaking his promise. First he said it would happen after the election, then it was the fall, then it was after the spring and now it will be when pigs fly.

Since he has never defined or given figures for the fiscal imbalance, will the Prime Minister admit that his promise was nothing but smoke and mirrors, that he had no solution and that he misled Quebecers?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the issues of equalization and fiscal balance and moving toward fiscal balance in Canada are of vital importance to the country. We issued a paper with the budget this year about restoring fiscal balance in Canada. We have had meetings of the various ministers responsible and their provincial colleagues. These discussions continue.

We will be talking about it more in the fiscal update to come this autumn and then in budget 2007. It is a very active file and is very important for all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a speech he delivered in Quebec City on December 19, the Prime Minister promised to resolve the fiscal imbalance. On May 2, in the budget speech, the Minister of Finance reiterated the Prime Minister's promise saying that there would be funding in the 2007 budget to resolve the fiscal imbalance. Yesterday we hear from the Prime Minister's mouth that resolving the fiscal imbalance could be put on the back burner if there is no consensus among the provinces.

Oral Questions

Is the Prime Minister reneging on the campaign promise he made to Quebeckers?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, it is very important that we try to reach a consensus with the provinces and territories about these important issues of equalization and transfer payments to the provinces. Those discussions are taking place. They have taken place. There will be more discussions in the coming months.

I think most Canadians would want the government, as Canada's new government, to move toward consensus, if possible, on these vital issues for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will be clear. On December 19, the Prime Minister did not say, "I will resolve this if there is consensus". Anyone can do that. If you say, "If everyone agrees, will you accept?", then I would say yes, we accept. If that is his reasoning, then what a joke. His promise was to resolve the fiscal imbalance and the Prime Minister knew full well there was no consensus.

In other words, is the Minister of Finance saying that they willingly misled Quebeckers during the last election?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our discussions with our colleagues in Quebec, as in the other provinces and territories, have been very constructive and cordial. Of course we want to move toward a consensus, if a consensus can be achieved. That may not be possible at the end of the day.

Again, I think most Canadians would want Canada's new government to work cooperatively with Quebec and the other jurisdictions toward that goal.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to justify his inaction on equalization, the Prime Minister says that he is waiting for a consensus from the provinces. Yet he has stated that improving equalization is his responsibility and that he will look after it.

By hiding behind an impossible consensus from Quebec and the provinces before acting, has the Prime Minister not finally found a convenient pretext for breaking his promise to Quebeckers?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, this is a multi-faceted issue. The transfers involve issues of infrastructure, post-secondary education, training, all of which are very important for the economic future of Canada, as well as the federal constitutional responsibility with respect to equalization.

We will continue with the discussions, as we said we would. We are on track.

• (1430)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by appointing as head of the public service the Liberals' former deputy finance minister, someone who always vehemently denied that the fiscal

imbalance even existed, is the Prime Minister not revealing what he really intends to do about the fiscal imbalance, which is to deny that it exists, fold his arms and break his promise to Quebeckers?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important for all of us to remember that the provinces have taxing powers and that, generally speaking, they should use their taxing powers to pay for purely provincial programs.

We have had very constructive discussions in recent months between the federal ministers and the provincial ministers, dealing with vital issues like infrastructure and post-secondary education. Those discussions will continue as planned and in accordance with the schedule that we set out in budget 2006.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now we learn that the Bloc Québécois strategy of supporting the Conservative budget is a failure, because the government clearly has not managed to correct the fiscal imbalance. That is true. In fact, now the Prime Minister is even saying that the fiscal imbalance is no longer a problem.

Why is the Prime Minister reneging on his commitments with respect to the fiscal imbalance? Is it because this imbalance is going to correct itself, given that the Prime Minister is going to reduce government revenues, forcing the provinces to increase their revenues?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are moving toward restoring fiscal balance in Canada. Our government has made that clear. The Prime Minister has made that clear.

It is something that members opposite failed to do when they were the government. In fact, we ended up in a rather confusing situation. Now we want to move forward to fiscal balance in Canada, focusing on fiscal balance for the provinces and the territories based on fairness and a principled approach.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the transfer of tax points from the federal government to the provinces has been known as the big lie of federalism, and it looks like the Prime Minister is about to make it a whole lot bigger.

Today we find out that the government has no intention of addressing the déséquilibre fiscal. It has no interest. In fact, the Conservatives tricked Canadians and Quebeckers on this score. All the government is going to do now is allow the provinces to increase their taxes, while the Prime Minister stands back and avoids any responsibility for dealing with any of the services.

Is this the secret deal that the Prime Minister cooked up with the Bloc? The Bloc supports the softwood sellout and the Prime Minister makes taxes go up in Quebec.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to go with that. There are a whole bunch of accusations and things.

What we are trying to accomplish is a rational basis for fiscal balance in Canada, based on fairness and principles, so we can move forward in our relationship with the provinces and the territories in a fair and principled way. Surely that is desirable for Canada. It is desirable for all the provinces and territories.

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Bar Association yesterday condemned the government's meanspirited decision to abolish the court challenges program, which helps those who are less fortunate protect their charter rights. Clearly, the government believes that the rights guaranteed to all Canadians under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms should only apply to those with money.

My question is for the Prime Minister. What right will the government attack next? Is it going to be the Minister of Justice standing up for all Canadians or just those who are wealthy enough to afford the lawyers? Does the government not believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, each and every member of this caucus supports the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We also believe in the equality of—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for London West has posed a question and she will not be able to hear the answer from the President of the Treasury Board. I cannot hear a word he is saying because there is so much noise. We will have some order in the House so we can hear the answer being given by the President of the Treasury Board, who has the floor at this moment.

•(1435)

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, we also believe in equality of disabled children. We are spending more than \$100 million more in this year's budget to provide services for families with a child with a disability.

We also support quality health care. Not only are we increasing the health care budget by 6%, we are investing more than \$52 million a year in cancer control, fighting cancer.

We are also providing significant tax measures to encourage more Canadians to support charities in our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative minority government's decision to abolish the court challenges program of Canada is worrisome for Franco-Ontarians, who still remember when Mike Harris's Conservative government tried to close Montfort Hospital along with 27 others.

Do the former members of the Harris government, known today as the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health and the President of Treasury Board, not get it? Are they only interested in the minority they are clinging to in this House?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear that we have supported the Official Languages Act.

Oral Questions

I will also add that when I was minister responsible for francophone affairs in Ontario, and the minister of health was the minister of health and long-term care, I was very proud when I called Mrs. Gisèle Lalonde, president of S.O.S. Montfort, to tell her that the hospital would not be closed.

[*English*]

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have greater respect and confidence in our judicial branch than that republican minority government.

Through the court challenges program, Canadians have been able to enhance minority rights and improve our laws. However, the Prime Minister continues to expose his disregard for our courts. This is a sober reminder of his infamous quote during the election, "Don't worry, the courts will hold me in check".

Is eliminating the court challenges program just a Conservative way of silencing our courts?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative minority government made promises to the francophone and Acadian communities, and it has broken them. The government has decided to cut the court challenges program of Canada, an important tool for francophones.

The president of Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes stated, "The government is attacking us, the champions of official languages."

Why is this government picking on minorities and depriving them of the means to defend themselves?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will state unequivocally that there are no cuts with respect to the Official Languages Act.

The exercise undertaken this week is quite different from what the Liberals did 10 years ago when they cut over 25% of official languages funding without providing any reason. Why are they protesting so loudly this time when the Liberal government had already made major cuts to official languages?

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INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government's \$42.2 million in cuts to the technology partnerships program have caused much worry in several industry sectors, including the aerospace sector.

This decision is all the more surprising given that the Minister of Industry has received a study showing that the program has had positive economic spin-offs amounting to \$32 billion since its creation.

Is the minister aware that his ideological approach, according to which the economy does not need any help from the government, is killing all of the initiatives that the technology partnerships program has launched over the years?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my hon. colleague that the program still exists.

Today, we are investing \$275 million in this program. We reviewed the program, and here is what we did: we took the necessary measures to ensure that any investment of taxpayer dollars in the program is transparent and that it is money well spent. This is why we still have a \$275 million program.

• (1440)

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Montreal, aerospace industry stakeholders expressed concern and highlighted the importance of having clear goals and effective support programs to ensure the harmonious development of the industry.

Does the minister realize that by cutting \$42 million and by threatening to cancel the technology partnerships program entirely, he is compromising future development in a crucial sector for greater Montreal, including Montréalégie?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform my colleague that I met with representatives of the aerospace sector yesterday, here in Ottawa. They told me that they were very happy with our decision to invest in the armed forces and in tactical aircraft, and to invest over \$13 billion that will benefit the aerospace industry across Canada.

* * *

TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Gildan textile company announced this morning that it will be closing its factory in Valleyfield, resulting in the definitive loss of 200 jobs. The Minister of Finance has announced cutbacks, and an unused sum of \$25 million intended for the textile and clothing sector will be cut.

How can the government justify the fact that the money intended to help the textile and clothing industries remains unused, while factories are closing one after the other and hundreds of workers are being callously laid off?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like many departments, we must do our fair share in terms of the cutbacks we were asked to make.

We examined the situation carefully and looked at all the programs. As for the CANtex program to help the textile industry, approximately \$5 million will be cut this year and \$11 million next year.

This still leaves nearly \$6 million for each of the next two years and the records show that only \$4 million was used in the past, which means that this is more than enough.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when asked about global warming, the Prime Minister said the following, which was surprising to say the least, "It is a complex,

evolving science. It is hard enough to predict the weather for next week or even tomorrow, let alone decades from now!" Those were his comments, which speak volumes about the Prime Minister's understanding of the environmental issues.

Do the Prime Minister's comments not betray his true intentions? Rather than protect the environment, he is protecting his friends the oil companies and rather than listen to scientists, he prefers to listen to his friend Bush.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague and tell him that our plan goes beyond the Kyoto protocol because the health of all Canadians and all Quebecers is our government's priority. Our plan addresses atmospheric pollution and climate change.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the meanspirited Conservative minority government just cannot help itself. It is slashing programs that help the most vulnerable Canadians and once again gun control is under attack. The safety of our communities should be a top priority for any government but clearly not for the present government.

The Minister of Public Safety should explain how gutting gun control makes Canadians safer.

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General pointed out over a period of years that money was being wasted terribly in the ineffective Liberal program.

We have taken those valuable resources and put them where citizens want to see them: more officers on our streets, safety programs, more dollars going to deal with gun smuggling at the borders and mandatory sentences for people who commit crimes with guns.

We figure it is about time to go after the criminals and we are doing that. We want to protect our young people. We want safe communities. We will have it that way.

• (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he simply does not get it.

The minority Conservative government is using one of the biggest surpluses in Canada's history as an excuse to cut funding for gun control.

Why does the Prime Minister not listen to the shooting victim from Dawson College, Hayder Kadhim, who said that instead of making it easier to commit such an act, it should be more difficult to access firearms?

Oral Questions

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely agree with what was just said. Our plan is to look into ways to make it more difficult to obtain a firearm, a prohibited firearm in particular. It is a good idea.

* * *

[English]

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a recent report by the Canadian Forest Service said that the pine beetle infestation in British Columbia is now threatening other species of trees and could spread right across the country.

Last year the Conservative member for Prince George—Peace River said, “It is the responsibility of the federal government to know about the impending consequences and, more important, to take action to mitigate the fallout”.

Why did the Conservative government promise money for the pine beetle and then turn its back on British Columbia with an \$11.7 million cut?

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should get his facts right. Unlike the old Liberal government that was not able to get anything done, the \$11.7 million was actually an old Liberal promise. The money was never committed and it was never spent.

This government in its budget committed \$200 million and every dime of it will go to British Columbia to fight the pine beetle. This government delivers. That government only made empty promises and never delivered anything.

Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, the minister should learn how to add.

When the trade minister was a Liberal, he used to brag about delivering \$100 million in pine beetle money for British Columbia. Last year the member for Cariboo—Prince George accused the minister of not delivering for B.C. on the pine beetle issue. Yesterday unfortunately, British Columbians learned that he was right.

Have those B.C. members not seen the devastation the pine beetle is doing in their very own ridings?

How can the minister possibly keep a straight face and claim to represent B.C. in cabinet when he cannot even deliver on the pine beetle money that he has already promised?

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will just say that the member from Prince George was absolutely right. The old, tired Liberal government made promises, and the \$11.7 million was an old Liberal promise, but it never delivered.

I am in consultations with the provincial minister of forests in British Columbia. We are working on programs and they are being delivered every time. We have 100% support from the province of British Columbia on our pine beetle programs, something that the old Liberal government could never ever get.

GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the party across the aisle would like to live in the past, this government is focused on working toward the future. To that end, on Monday, this government announced that the \$13.2 billion surplus would go toward paying down the national debt.

The former finance minister would like the money. Could the current finance minister please explain how Canadians and this country will benefit from that surplus being used to pay down the debt?

• (1450)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that we will save approximately \$650 million in annual interest payments. That is money paid by Canadian taxpayers because they work hard, and now it can be used for programs in Canada that benefit all Canadians.

More than that, in terms of intergenerational equity, this savings will happen year after year, for the benefit of all Canadians, of around \$650 million a year.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the cuts they have made this week, the Conservatives have said no to families working for a better life, no to affordable housing for seniors, no to the first nations and no to Canadians learning to read and write, but with a wink, wink, they are continuing to pay \$1.5 billion to their friends in the oil industry, who are turning profits hand over fist.

Will the minister do what is important for Canadians and promise to put an end to this pollution scandal?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House what the government will do. We will ensure that every tax dollar is spent wisely and well. We will ensure we spend tax dollars efficiently, effectively, responsibly and accountably, which is the type of spending this country has not seen in a very long time.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the environment minister will not get to her feet and address the environmental hypocrisy that her government perpetuates is a scandal.

We all know that George W. Bush is in a big hurry to get his hands on Canadian oil but the Canadian government is supposed to be fighting for our interests and not selling out our future for a greasy buck. Even Ralph Klein apologized for his wild west approach to development. Even Arnold gets it now.

Oral Questions

Will the minister do what it takes and stop barreling ahead with out of control development in the oil sands?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): That was quite the impression, Mr. Speaker.

Let us talk about action on the environment because that is actually what this government is delivering and what Canadians want.

While the Liberals were preening on the international stage and the NDP was sending out press releases, this government passed the first tough regulation on mercury. That took us just two months. It will reduce smog, infant death, blindness and lung cancer. That is the kind of action Canadians deserve on the environment and that is the kind of action this government will continue to deliver.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the last general election, the Conservatives made the following promise in writing to the Canadian Museums Association, “Please be assured that generous funding for Canada’s museums will be a priority for a Conservative government”.

My question is rather straightforward. Why did the minority Conservative government break its promise?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we did not break our promise. In fact, we are going forward to deliver to Canadians.

Canada’s new government will spend \$245 million on museums. We inherited 10 years of neglect on museums and that is why they deserve an efficient and effective new museum policy, and we will deliver.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what it has delivered is a cut of 25% to the museum program.

[*Translation*]

In reaction to the decision to cut the museums assistance program, John McAvity, executive director of the Canadian Museums Association, said, “We are shocked, puzzled and feel betrayed by these cuts”.

What is the government waiting for in order to reverse its decision and even increase funding for the museums assistance program?

[*English*]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the best way to help museums is to ensure we have an effective policy that will meet their needs. We will continue to fund the museums. In fact, the regional and small museums will be equally funded and supported across the country.

We believe Mr. McAvity could be more positively contributing to our formulation of a new museums policy and we welcome his contribution.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Malpeque.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sure hon. members want to encourage the hon. member to speak up but we have to be able to hear him. The hon. member for Malpeque has the floor now, so we will have a little order.

* * *

● (1455)

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): On Monday, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food attempted to deny knowledge of a fake letter-writing propaganda campaign on behalf of government and government MPs for the purpose of undermining the Canadian Wheat Board.

Will the minister come clean today and inform the House of which government MPs and officials and whether he or his parliamentary secretary were involved in this blatant and unscrupulous effort to manipulate public opinion and, in the process, violate the laws of Canada?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the member for Malpeque up on his hind legs talking about agriculture, sort of.

As I told the member the other day, no one on this side of the House has a clue what they are talking about over there. No one over here has ever approached any company to write letters.

Farmers are able to get their point across to governments and members of Parliament. I encourage them to do that. Farmers do not need a consultant to do that.

On this side of the House we are listening. Farmers can be assured after 13 years of being ignored that this side of the House is paying attention to what they are saying.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, grain producers will not be impressed by that answer.

My question is for the acting prime minister. This minister, adding to yesterday’s \$20 million cut, is proposing to undermine the Wheat Board which will reduce collectively western grain incomes by \$265 million a year. It is another attack on Canadian farmers.

Worse is using fake letters, manipulating the media, stacked government task forces and circumventing the laws of Canada. Is this the Prime Minister’s definition of ethics and democracy?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the member could say that without wearing his tinfoil hat on a grassy knoll.

What we do know is that this government has not cut \$20 million. The government has added \$1.5 billion to the agriculture department.

Oral Questions

The government continues to work with farmers to make sure the programming that was brought in by the Liberal government, such as an improperly brought in CAIS program, lack of a green cover crop program, lack of facilities for farmers from coast to coast in science and technology; after 13 years of neglect, finally this side of the House, this new government is getting the job done for farmers, notwithstanding the scare tactics of the member opposite.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last December 16, the Conservative Party made a clear commitment in writing to provide stable, predictable, long-term funding for museums.

Today, rather than keeping its promise, it is doing the exact opposite by cutting funding for museums to the tune of \$4.6 million.

How can the heritage minister justify that her government, after making a promise in writing, can so flagrantly go back on that promise? It is appalling.

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member who is on the standing committee would understand. I know that he, as do many members in this House, believes that we have to use taxpayers' dollars so that they deliver what museums need.

In fact, we have heard from museums across this country, including the museum in Cranbrook and the Revelstoke Railway Museum. They understand. They want a good museum policy. They want one that is effective. The museums know they can use the funding once the government has decided on what their real needs will be.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the government slashes social economy funding that primarily targets social integration and voluntary work, it continues to provide \$250 million in tax breaks to oil companies that, I think you will agree, do not really need them.

Is this not an ideological choice that is much more detrimental to Quebec given that the latter is much more advanced in matters of social economy than the rest of Canada?

• (1500)

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the comments of the opposition members and I feel that they should be more respectful of the work that we do in terms of economic development.

In recent months, with a budget of \$200 million, we have examined what we can do for companies, for regions with declining populations, to help them increase economic activity. To this end, we

have four specific measures to spur regional economic development and we will continue—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of ACOA.

The government continues to help those who need it the least while hurting those who need help the most. Even the old Progressive Conservative Party, whose demise the minister helped arrange, had a little compassion, not much but a little, but not that bunch who are cancelling the child care agreements, cutting the GST which disproportionately benefits the wealthy and now are eliminating funds to small and medium size businesses and community groups that work in the social economy.

Would the minister as a former Progressive Conservative finally confess that even he is embarrassed by the meanspirited policies of this regressive Conservative government?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is truly embarrassing is a member from Atlantic Canada supporting the only Atlantic Canadian MP in the Liberal leadership contest who advocates the axing of ACOA, getting rid of regional development in Atlantic Canada, completely eliminating the most important regional development, I would suggest, in the country.

That member perhaps can try to square that hypocritical contradictory circle for us.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the director of women's affairs in Kandahar, Safia Amajan was murdered outside her home by two gunmen on a motorcycle. She had been a teacher, an advocate for women's rights for more than three decades and ran an underground girls' school during Taliban rule.

I ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs, what is the government's reaction to this outrage?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Safia Amajan was the director of women's affairs in Kandahar. She devoted her life to advancing women's rights. She devoted her life to seeing that young girls were able to go to school. Her life was cut short by a brutal and violent attack by terrorists.

As I stated yesterday, Canada condemns this heinous crime which, among the other recent attacks, including those that have hurt Afghan children, demonstrates that these terrorists seek only to destroy life and the fundamental freedoms which we hold dear and these will not be abandoned. Our resolve will not break or bend in the wake of those cowardly attacks.

Speaker's Ruling

Canada, alongside 36 other countries serving this NATO-led UN backed mission, will work with the Afghan people to support their efforts, to support the enhancement of women's rights to integrate fully into civil society.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it looks as though the Conservatives have been practising their sleight of hand again.

It seems with all the focus on cutting women's programs, programs for the disabled, literacy programs, they have overlooked something. They have overlooked their promise to everyday families to a patient wait time guarantee.

Ordinary Canadians are suffering because of this so-called fifth commitment, and the minister who has promised it has vanished altogether.

When will the Minister of Health do what he promised to do and reduce wait times from their unacceptable level for patients in this country?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on this issue, as I have been doing all summer. In fact, there has been great progress made throughout the country when it comes to reducing wait times, as a result I might add, of the commitment of this new Conservative government to increase the pot for transfer payments for health by fully \$1.1 billion and to increase the escalator for health care funding by 6%. That is real money going toward real patients to help solve the problem created by 13 years of Liberal rule.

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the minister respond in the House today, but where was he when St. Paul's Hospital in British Columbia was renting public MRI machines to private companies and people were paying thousands of dollars to get to the head of the line? Where was he when in Cambridge, Ontario the hospital admitted it was using a private agency to deliver its emergency services?

At a time when the government has record surpluses, how can it explain there are billions of dollars to subsidize polluting industries, but no wait time guarantees for patients?

• (1505)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, there is a process by which provincial health ministers deal with these issues. In fact the British Columbia case that she referenced is being dealt with by the British Columbia minister.

I am no expert—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Tony Clement: I am not a medical expert.

Mr. Speaker, I would advise the member that she not get too much out of control on this issue as she might get a hernia and then she

would be behind Jack Layton, who used private hernia services when he needed—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I remind hon. members that referring to other hon. members by name is out of order. I think I recognized a member's name there.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

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GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet this morning someone else has weighed in on these meanspirited cuts. Earlier today Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Danny Williams expressed his views on the cuts announced.

In his view these cuts define the difference between the hard right-wing Conservatives in Ottawa and the Progressive Conservatives in his government. Specifically he said, “the one that came to my mind immediately, literacy, a huge issue for us here in the province, and women's issues, a big issue across the country”. He also criticized the government for eliminating funding for minority groups who want to protect their legal issues.

Now if the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: The President of the Treasury Board is rising to answer.

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side of the House were a bit concerned. We had a \$13.2 billion surplus and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The President of the Treasury Board has the floor.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I have a great quote here talking about the billions of dollars in taxpayers' money, and I quote, “Nothing starts a feeding frenzy more than the smell of cash around Liberal backbenchers”. Who said that? The member for Kings—Hants.

The Speaker: That will bring a close to question period for today.

* * *

• (1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

KYOTO PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTATION ACT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair is now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. government House leader on June 16, 2006 in relation to the procedural issues relating to Bill C-288, the Kyoto protocol implementation act, standing in the name of the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

[Translation]

I want to begin by thanking the hon. government House leader for having raised this matter and by thanking the hon. members for Mississauga South, Honoré-Mercier and Winnipeg Centre for having made contributions on this matter.

[English]

In his submission, the government House leader argued that this bill commits the government to significant expenditures and therefore requires a royal recommendation. In support of this fact, he referred to the spending which was included in the supplementary estimates for the 2005-06 fiscal year by the previous government. Parliament was dissolved in November 2005 before the appropriation act emanating from those estimates could be voted on, and subsequently the moneys were authorized through Governor General special warrants. The House leader therefore concludes that it is evident that this bill entails considerable spending and so requires a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

In a ruling earlier this week on a similar matter, namely, C-292, An Act to implement the Kelowna Accord, the Chair made a distinction between a bill asking the House to approve certain objectives and a bill asking the House to approve the measures to achieve certain objectives. So too in the case before us, the adoption of a bill calling on the government to implement the Kyoto protocol might place an obligation on the government to take measures necessary to meet the goals set out in the protocol but the Chair cannot speculate on what those measures may be. If spending is required, as the government House leader contends, then a specific request for public monies would need to be brought forward by means of an appropriation bill, as was the case in 2005, or through another legislative initiative containing an authorization for the spending of public money for a specific purpose.

[English]

As it stands, Bill C-288 does not contain provisions which specifically authorize any spending for a distinct purpose relating to the Kyoto protocol. Rather, the bill seeks the approval of Parliament for the government to implement the protocol. If such approval is given, then the government would decide on the measures it wished to take. This might involve an appropriation bill or another bill proposing specific spending, either of which would require a royal recommendation.

[Translation]

As Bill C-288 stands, however, the Chair must conclude that the bill does not require a royal recommendation and may proceed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

GREEN GABLES

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to table a petition today on behalf of quite a number of constituents in

Routine Proceedings

the riding of Malpeque and across Prince Edward Island who ask the House of Commons and the Government of Canada to stop the destruction of the Green Gables tennis courts, which are designated for a new golf course and a putting green in their place. It makes no sense at all to tear down a perfectly good tennis court when there is all kinds of available space. On behalf of my constituents, I have the honour to present this petition.

FAMILIES

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be tabling two petitions in the House today, both from people who live in my constituency.

The first petition calls on the federal government to take action to support families, which of course our government is doing and will continue to do.

● (1515)

DATE RAPE DRUGS

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the federal government to get aggressive with regard to date rape drugs, which is an issue that I have pushed over the years as a member of Parliament.

AGE OF CONSENT

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

The first petition concerns the protection of children from sexual predators. The petitioners suggest that this must be a top priority of the government. The petitioners note that studies show that 14 year olds and 15 year olds are most vulnerable to sexual exploitation and pray that the House would raise the age of consent from 14 years to 16 years of age.

FALUN GONG

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns Falun Gong and the petitioners' concern about the harvesting of organs from unwilling donors, which is one way of putting it. The petitioners urge the House to pass a motion that the House condemn the Communist government in China for committing these crimes against humanity and discourage Canadians from travelling to China for organ transplants.

DELTAPORT

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition has to do with the expansion of Deltaport. The petitioners are concerned about noise, the effect that the expansion will have on the community, and the fact that substantive measures have not been taken to mitigate the impact of that expansion.

Routine Proceedings

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition deals with the current federal criminal law, whereby an unborn child is not respected when it is a victim of violence. The petitioners suggest that the vast majority of the public supports laws to protect unborn children from acts of violence against their mothers that also injure or kill the child in the womb. They ask Parliament to recognize this fact and to enact a law that would allow for two charges to be laid against the offender rather than just one.

FALUN GONG

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present on behalf of constituents.

The first petition is signed by over 100 of my constituents. It is on behalf of Falun Gong practitioners. It petitions the House of Commons to condemn the Chinese government regime against Falun Gong practitioners and to take active measures to investigate and help stop the mass killing and organ harvesting in the Sujiatun concentration camp in Shenyang, China.

AGE OF CONSENT

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is on behalf of well over 60 constituents in my riding. It calls on the Government of Canada to raise the age of consent from 14 years to 16 years of age.

CANADA HEALTH AND SOCIAL TRANSFER

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal government in 1995 did away with the Canada assistance plan and took literally billions of dollars out of that transfer, there is no way of knowing where the billions of dollars go that still flow from the federal government to the provincial governments to support all kinds of social programs, including post-secondary education and housing. There is no accountability. There is no framework. We have no way of knowing the effectiveness of the spending of this money.

These 176 people are asking that the government set up a task force to address this, to cross the country, to find out what people are experiencing and to come in with some suggestions on a way that we might bring back some accountability to the social transfer and make it truly the vehicle that the federal government needs it to be if we are to help those most at risk and marginalized in our community.

AGE OF CONSENT

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to rise in the House to present a petition signed by the residents of Fleetwood—Port Kells. The petitioners call upon the government assembled in Parliament to take all necessary measures to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 years to 16 years of age.

IRAQ

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of 1,436 Canadians in my community in and around Victoria who call on the government to provide for U.S. war resisters to have sanctuary in our country.

The petitioners ask the government to show its commitment to international law by not returning conscientious objectors to the United States where they could face incarceration or other punishment because they refuse to serve in the Iraq war, a war that many deem illegal under international law and a war opposed by many Canadians.

● (1520)

TRANSPORT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from residents of my riding of Langley. The petition deals with the serious transportation problems in Langley, those of congestion and public safety, resulting from trains that go through Langley, cutting it in half. The petitioners are asking that relevant ministers provide federal government funding and support in developing a long range, 50 year master transportation plan for the lower mainland and assist Langley in determining whether alternate and safe routes for bulk and container traffic that travels through Langley is warranted. They ask that the federal government provide adequate funding for railroad separation projects and potential alternate routes and assist Langley to secure efficient, workable and affordable transportation systems that include light rail at surface levels, with growth capacity as required.

[*Translation*]

AGE OF CONSENT

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by 25 people in my riding. These petitioners are asking the House to take the necessary measures to raise the age of sexual consent from 14 to 16 as soon as possible.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 28 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 28—**Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With respect to the procedures and practices of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness regarding immigrant students: (a) how many schools and school board officials have been approached by either department for information regarding the status of their students; (b) how many students have been apprehended or approached by either department since January 1, 2004; (c) what are the policies and procedures regarding entering educational institutions; and (d) have any officers of either department been reprimanded because policy was not followed?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER PRODUCTS EXPORT CHARGE ACT, 2006

The House resumed from September 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to impose a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products to the United States and a charge on refunds of certain duty deposits paid to the United States, to authorize certain payments, to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and to amend other Acts as a consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: At the time the debate adjourned last night, there was a five minute question and comment period left after the 10 minute speech given by the hon. member for West Nova.

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we found out yesterday that the Liberals on the international trade committee moved to kill softwood hearings that were scheduled in northern Quebec, in the Saguenay, and in Thunder Bay in northern Ontario, which is the epicentre of what will befall this industry if the Conservatives succeed in pushing through this bungled legislation.

Also, in British Columbia they did the same. In British Columbia in particular we know that half of that \$1 billion giveaway is from British Columbians. British Columbia communities are being forced by the Conservative government to give up half a billion dollars in illegally taken tariffs. That is B.C.'s money.

The Conservatives, under the direction of the international trade minister, who has no opportunity of being elected even as a dog catcher in his riding of Vancouver Kingsway because he is so detested for his betrayal of his constituents, have abandoned British

Columbia. Other Conservatives from British Columbia are simply following along. It is pretty clear that no Conservatives will be elected west of the Rockies in the next election.

What I cannot understand is why the Liberals would move to kill hearings in northern Ontario when there are supposedly Liberal members who supposedly represent northern Ontario. Twenty per cent of the mills will close and 20% of jobs will be lost in northern Ontario as a result of this deal. This information comes from testimony we heard at committee this summer, yet the Liberals have moved to kill the hearings. This is absolutely despicable.

My question is quite simple. Why did the Liberals kill hearings that would have allowed people in northern Ontario, British Columbia and the Saguenay in Quebec the opportunity to voice their concerns about this sellout, this bad deal?

● (1525)

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not sit on the committee. I am not a member of the committee. Members decide their own fate and their own agenda. I know that we have had excellent work done by the member for Beauséjour, the member for Sydney—Victoria, and other members from our party. They sat through most of the summer recess. They heard from many witnesses on the question and voted against the resolution and are voting against the bill because we understand that this is not good for Canada.

We understand, and I believe, that forestry workers, whether they be harvesters, working in the sawmills, the added-value market, the transportation market or are associated with the industry in one way or another in the spin-off industries, will understand what the people of Vancouver Kingsway know. They will understand that the minister will sell them out at a moment's notice for very little interest to himself. For the value of a car and driver he crossed the floor. For his links with one company in particular, I believe that is why he went ahead with this deal.

He had presented to forestry workers and the industry a framework agreement in the spring that was worthy of discussion, that did have interest in all sectors. However, rather than going through consultations, rather than discussing with the industry and ensuring that we had an agreement that had advantage for Canadians, with one quick trip by our little bush, by the shrub, by the little bush of a Prime Minister, who had to meet with his patron saint in Washington and came back with an agreement that was a sellout of our Canadian industry.

We understand that strongly and that is why this side is not supporting the bill before Parliament at the present time.

Ms. Helena Guergis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the hon. member from the Liberal Party that the Minister of International Trade and our Prime Minister's focus has been on the communities, families and industry that have been devastated by this dispute, which has gone on for 24 years. This last legal battle has been five years alone.

Government Orders

We were focused on returning the duties back to the industry. Some 81% of the duties that have been paid will be returned to the entire industry across Canada. I also remind the hon. member that over 90% of the industry supports the deal. All of our major softwood lumber producing provinces support the deal.

He talked about the member for Beauséjour, who sits on the trade committee. All of the industries in his riding have asked him to support the deal, yet he has chosen to ignore it. I suggest it is just because the Liberals are bitter because our government achieved something that they were not able to achieve after 13 years.

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Speaker, that is preposterous. Hearing after hearing and tribunal after tribunal at the World Trade Organization and at NAFTA found that 100% of the duties belong to Canadian producers and we are settling for 81% and leaving the interest there.

As to the claims of 90% support, there has been force bordering on extortion, forcing these people to sign on saying that if they did not they would not get their money back. The bankers have billions of dollars in loan guarantees, loan extensions or lines of credit for these people. They are forcing them to sign on because they know they do not have the support of the Conservative government.

The industry and the communities know that they do not have the support. If they were supportive they would have followed the truth. They would have assisted the communities. They would have given loan guarantees. They would have assisted in the challenges at the international level in the American courts, so that we would ensure that we protect our North American Free Trade Agreement for the benefit of all Canadians and for future sectors.

In a very few months, we will see a round of bankruptcies like we could never have predicted because of the actions that the government has taken. It is inaction and it is a sellout to the American sector. It is a sellout of Canadian jobs.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is great to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-24, the softwood lumber products export charge act, that implements the softwood lumber agreement between Canada and the United States. This agreement is very important to people in my constituency in Burnaby, B.C. and to people all over British Columbia and all over Canada, so I am very glad to stand today to discuss it.

The bottom line is that this is a bad deal. It is a bad deal for Burnaby. It is a bad deal for British Columbia and it is a bad deal for Canada.

We have heard from various corners of this House over the last few days the various rationalizations of this bad deal. From the corner over here where the Bloc sits, we have heard that it is an imperfect deal. When I heard some of the members from the Bloc speaking to this, I saw people who were bowed, who caved, and who did not feel comfortable about their own position. To say that it is imperfect is a huge understatement.

I heard from the government's corner, members from British Columbia who said that this was the best possible deal. That sure falls short of saying it was a good deal, but it also again belies this real discomfort with the kind of legislation that we are dealing with

and it masks the fact that it is a bad deal. It is a bad deal, plain and simple, and it is a sellout of Canada.

This deal came at a time when Canada was on the verge of winning after a long legal process. We had won every single step of the way, holding the Americans to agreements they signed with Canada. What could be more important than to stand up for those agreements that had our signatures and their signatures on them?

The Tembec case, for instance, was subject to only one final appeal and the extraordinary challenges committee judgment would have come out in August. We were in a position to win both of them. There was no question about that. In fact, members do not have to believe me, they just need to listen to the testimony of the Canadian ambassador to Washington, Michael Wilson, who this summer pointed out before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade that there were no appeals on the extraordinary challenges committee judgment and there is no appeal on the Tembec case after the ruling was made.

Rather than a victory, we have this deal. I have heard it said in this corner of the House that this is the government snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. How does this represent Canada at all? We were winning every step of the way and now we have this bad deal, and such a deal it is.

A key feature of this deal is that Canada has to give up \$1 billion in illegally collected levies to the United States. All the way through the legal process, it was shown that these duties and levies were illegally collected and now with this deal, we give that \$1 billion to the United States. This \$1 billion was collected from Canadian companies, causing them incredible hardship. It is money that was also taken from Canadian workers, Canadian families and Canadian communities, and B.C. communities have been extremely hard hit through all of this.

Why, when Canada was on the verge of victory, would the Conservatives sign off on the important principles at stake and give the Americans \$1 billion to boot? We have lost the principle about the importance of our trade agreements with the United States. We have lost the principle about using the mechanisms that hold us to account on those agreements. We have lost the argument about protecting our softwood lumber industry, and we give the Americans \$1 billion to boot.

We have to consider too, how is that money going to be used? We know for a fact that \$500 million of it, half of it, is going directly to the US Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports. Who are they? They are the very people who initiated and pursued the attack on the Canadian softwood lumber industry. They initiated all of this in the first place and now we are giving them \$500 million. We know they ran out of money and now, thanks to the Conservatives, we are refilling their war chest, funding their litigation and lobbying for years to come.

Do we really think they will not use it? The question is when, not if, they are going to use it. Will it take two years? Will it take nine years? There is no question that they are going to use that money again against our industry.

Government Orders

Given that tendency, which industry is next? Now that we have caved on softwood lumber, we know that other industries are in the sights of the Americans. What aspect of our trade policy will they attack next? What protectionist is planning an assault on another Canadian industry? Which of our natural resources will they seek to scoop up next?

● (1530)

I think some of us in this corner believe that the Wheat Board is the next thing that is in the sight of the Americans. We know and we have heard from farmers all across Canada about the importance of the Wheat Board and the fact that they feel that it is the next thing in the sights of protectionist Americans. We have to stand up and fight for the Wheat Board. It has brought stability and a stable income to Canadian farmers.

It is ironic that we sit here today discussing an agreement that would give U.S. lobbyists a half a billion dollar fund for legal challenges to our industries two days after the Conservative government announced that it was cutting the Canadian court challenges program. This is a modest \$5.6 million program that allowed the most vulnerable and disenfranchised in our society along with disadvantaged Canadians and minority groups the ability to challenge decisions and policies of the Canadian government.

We have seen in the past the importance of this for language rights in Canada, for equality rights for the gay and lesbian community, for citizenship rights, and for other minority rights in Canada. Now the program is gone.

It seems that the Conservatives cannot help our own people ensure their place in Canadian society, but we can give 80 times the money that was in the court challenges program to the Americans who want to circumvent the trade agreements that they have signed with Canada and want to ruin Canadian industry.

The Conservatives cut Canada's human rights related court challenges program and they fund a new half a billion dollar court challenges program for Americans to use against Canada. It is a shame. It does not make sense. If for no other reason this bill should not be supported on that basis.

Let us look at the other half a billion dollars that the Conservatives are allowing the Americans to keep. Where does it go? It goes directly to the White House for the use of President Bush. The official agreement says that this money will be used for:

- (a) educational and charitable causes in timber-reliant communities;
- (b) low-income housing and disaster relief;
- (c) educational and public-interest projects addressing:
 - (i) forest management issues—

That sounds great.

Let us hear what Frances Russell said about this \$450 million in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. She said:

Fully \$450 million of the \$1.3 billion in illegal duties the Americans will get to keep will grease re-election wheels for protectionist Republicans facing tough fights in upcoming midterm congressional elections. Canada's timber industry will thus be forced to subsidize an ongoing, illicit, attack on itself. All with the explicit consent of the Canadian government.

Well, the Conservatives may consent to this, the Bloc may consent to this, but New Democrats will not.

American negotiators have taken care of American workers. Let us say that even if the \$450 million was used in a completely altruistic fashion and went as the agreement indicates, where is the support for Canadian companies, Canadian workers, and Canadian communities devastated by this agreement? It is not to be found in this deal.

There is \$4 billion coming back to Canada, but there is no requirement for reinvestment in Canadian communities, reinvestment in the Canadian industry, and there is a fear that much of that money will go to fund investment by those same companies in investment in the United States. That is not acceptable either.

Even the Bloc members, who are concerned about the displacement of workers because of this crisis, are left to raise over and over again, pleading with the Conservatives to announce something that will assist them because it just is not in the deal. I do not think anyone needs a second reason to vote against Bill C-24, but there it is.

Two days ago I was in the House to hear my colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster and our representative on the international trade committee, speak to this issue. He outlined many of the key problems with this deal. They include that the U.S. only has to allege non-compliance with Canada to get out of the deal.

In clause 10, the imposition of a 15% export tax as of October 1 amounts to double taxation above and beyond current anti-dumping and countervailing duties.

In clause 18 there is a new special punitive tax originally designed to hit those companies that are standing up for Canadian rights and responsibilities under NAFTA and who will choose to continue litigation, but now everyone faces that tax. When added to the export development charge, all companies will end up paying 37% and they will have to pay up front.

Clause 48 imposes a six year burden of record keeping on companies, increasing their administrative burden.

Clause 77 states that warrants are no longer needed to enter softwood businesses when issues of enforcement of the act are pursued. These are harsh measures against companies. I think they violate fundamental rights.

● (1535)

In clause 89, it is as blank cheque to the minister to demand payment from companies with no appeal mechanism. What happens in the event of a calculation problem? Too bad. There is no appeal.

In clause 95, directors of companies will now be individually responsible and there is no appeal process. It goes on and on.

Let me just finish by giving the final word for the Prime Minister. In the House on October 25, 2005, he said:

Government Orders

Most recently, the NAFTA extraordinary challenges panel ruled that there was no basis for these duties, but the United States has so far refused to accept the outcome and has asked Canada to negotiate a further settlement. Let me repeat what I have said before, and let me be as clear as I can. This is not a time for negotiation. It is a time for compliance.

At the time, we thought he meant the Americans had to comply with the court decisions. Unfortunately, it appears that he really meant that Canadians had to comply with the whims of the American industry and the whims of American protectionists.

It is just not acceptable. It is a bad deal. We must vote against the legislation.

● (1540)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas say that it was his understanding that certain members of the Bloc Québécois felt uncomfortable about supporting the bill as it stood. I would like to clarify our position.

We are not really uncomfortable. We know that this is a bad agreement. However, just as forest companies in British Columbia need to sell off their wood because the situation is urgent, for Quebec, as well, we can no longer put off this agreement. By not offering loan guarantees, the current government and the previous government refused to help businesses stay afloat during negotiations and while awaiting the final court rulings regarding the cases pending. Otherwise, it would have been possible for businesses—whether in Quebec, British Columbia or Ontario—to stay afloat, and to challenge the American government and its lobbyists in order to definitively obtain justice.

We now have an opening, since we are told that the agreement signed will not necessarily last seven years, as originally planned. In fact, anyone can put an end to this agreement, including British Columbia, or I believe so, in any case. Thus, once British Columbia has sold off its wood, will it change tactics and demand that the agreement be reopened? We would then find ourselves in negotiations once again, maybe nearly as long as these have been. Perhaps the future government called upon to debate the case will resolve it for good.

[English]

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, it has been really difficult listening to folks from the Bloc as they struggle to articulate their position on this important legislation. I think they are embarrassed about the position they have had to take. They feel backed into a corner like Conservatives and like the companies often have felt, that they did not have any choice around this legislation.

I am used to hearing something a little more principled and a little more demanding from that corner of the House. It is not like people in that corner of the House to give up an important principle so easily. I think that is what has happened, especially when we were on the verge of winning this case.

Also, it is clear in this agreement that provinces lose sovereignty over establishing their own provincial forestry policies. It is very clear that the United States will have the opportunity to vet any changes in provincial forestry policies. How that could be acceptable to members from the Bloc Québécois, given their position on the

sovereignty of Quebec, is beyond me. It is not acceptable to me, as a member from British Columbia.

Steve Hunt, one of the western Canadian directors of the United Steelworkers said it very clearly. He said:

This deal doesn't need tweaking, it needs a complete rewrite...part of a "sell-out strategy." If this is what Bush-Harper talks have achieved, then we'd prefer continued litigation, rather than a Softwood Lumber Agreement that might only last a few years and gives up provincial sovereignty over forest policy.

It is not acceptable to the steelworkers. It is not acceptable to the forestry workers of British Columbia.

● (1545)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my NDP colleague and to my Liberal colleague, who spoke earlier, and I simply do not understand their position.

I am on the international trade committee. I worked at the committee throughout the summer. I heard the testimony from witnesses and I read their testimonies. Softwood lumber companies are in favour of this agreement, overwhelming so. Some 90% of our industry is in favour of this, but there is more.

The premiers of the key softwood lumber producing provinces are also in favour of the softwood lumber agreement. In fact, the premier from the member's province is in favour of it and he has asked, actually almost begged, the member to support the softwood lumber agreement to help forestry workers and to help the lumber industry in British Columbia.

What is my colleague saying to the softwood lumber companies that are endorsing the agreement? What is the message he is giving them, that he happens to know better than they do what is good for them, better than the people who are in this industry?

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, the member says we do not understand the deal. He will never understand the importance of the deal, the problems with it and the fact that many Canadians think this is a bad deal. He will not be travelling with the committee across the country to hear testimony from Canadians on this issue.

The committee in the summer decided to visit the Saguenay, Thunder Bay and Vancouver to hear from Canadians and companies about this deal. The committee agreed to set up that kind of tour. Then yesterday, on a motion from two Liberal members, the member for Welland and the member for Sydney—Victoria, it revisited that decision and cancelled the hearings.

That is unacceptable. Canadians must have the chance to express their views on this important agreement. Thanks to members, like the one who asked me the question, they are not going to get that opportunity. That is not appropriate.

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current dispute on the softwood lumber has existed for nearly 20 years and is clearly the most important trade issue between Canada and the United States. It is commonly known as "lumber dispute four".

Government Orders

The issue centred on what is called stumpage fees, the amount charged by the Canadian government to lumber companies to harvest timber from public land. The U.S. lumber industry claimed that the stumpage fees were too low, thereby amounting to unfair trade subsidies.

In 2001 the U.S. government responded by imposing duties on Canadian softwood lumber entering that country. To date these duties, illegally collected from our forestry sector, have amounted to over \$5.4 billion. The Washington-based Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports further claimed that Canadian firms were dumping product into markets at less than fair value.

Until the Conservatives came to power, the Government of Canada consistently and continually defended our forestry management regime, denying that it was subsidizing the lumber industry or that softwood lumber was being dumped into the U.S. The issues have been litigated seven different times through the U.S. courts and NAFTA and WTO trade panels, and Canada has won all seven decisions.

These decisions favourable to Canada mean that we are not guilty of subsidizing, we are not harming the U.S. industry and we are not dumping.

Let us think back to the January 2006 election campaign and the Conservative promise to demand that the U.S. government play by the rules on softwood lumber, repeal the Byrd amendment and return more than \$5 billion in illegal softwood lumber tariffs to Canadian producers.

Let us move forward a mere three months to April 2006, when the Prime Minister announced, with great fanfare, that he reached an agreement on the softwood lumber issue. Although the details were missing, it was readily apparent that the Conservatives had broken their campaign promise to the lumber producers and to Canadians.

With the proposed agreement, the Conservative government has abandoned the Canadian position and has thrown away all the precedent-setting decisions favourable to Canada. This will negatively impact future disputes on the softwood industry when we become engaged in "lumber dispute five", which I have no doubt will come in the not too distant future.

The implications reach beyond the softwood lumber trade, to all trade sectors with the U.S.

The credibility and integrity of this dispute resolution process of NAFTA and the series of rulings based on trade provisions have effectively been washed away. The dispute settlement chapter of NAFTA, chapter 19, just went out the window. So much for the rule of law, so much for justice and so much for fair play, let alone free trade.

The Conservatives should hang their heads in shame for this sellout. Not only has the Conservative government acquiesced into a settlement adverse to our forest industry, it has undercut Canada's rule-based trading relationship with the U.S. which will now encourage other U.S. sectors to ignore trade rules and, instead, seek political decisions in their favour, which will lead to more trade uncertainty. And for what? For 24 months of trade peace on the softwood industry; two short years.

The members opposite have chortled that it is a seven year agreement, with an option for two more years. However, the devil is in the details. They want Canadians to overlook the escape clause that allows either party to get out after 24 months. There is a stipulation that no retaliatory action can take place for one further year after this, but does this Conservative government really think that a government or a forestry industry, which refuses to respect the decisions in seven separate trade disputes, will respect these provisions? It is not likely.

Twenty-four months; two years. Members can be the judge. No, the Canadian people will be the judge in the next election.

What about the \$5.4 billion of illegal tariffs that have been collected from our lumber companies? One billion dollars, or nearly 18% of these illegal tariffs, will be left on the U.S. table instead of being returned to the rightful owners in the Canadian forestry industry.

The ultimate insult is that \$500 million of this will go to the coalition for U.S. lumber imports, the very organization that has led the charge against our softwood industries, the very lobby group that started this trade war. It is a sweet deal for it. Effectively, we reimburse it for its legal fees and expenses, even though it has consistently lost the decisions, and we also provide the coalition with a slush fund for future legal and political attacks to fight "softwood lumber five". It is a sweet deal, indeed.

Canadians are a generous and accommodating people, but this is simply ludicrous. This is simply incomprehensible.

A further sum of \$450 million will go, not to the U.S. treasury, but to the U.S. administration for yet unnamed meritorious initiatives.

• (1550)

What does this mean? I heard one trade lawyer at committee speculate that it will go to buildings and bridges and other goodies offered in a U.S. election year. Is that preposterous? Perhaps not. I will tell members what it is. It is simply ludicrous and incomprehensible. Canada should not be interfering in U.S. elections.

The whole issue confirms that the U.S. is a trade bully. It is prepared to play by the rules only when it feels like it and when it is to its advantage.

Government Orders

However, there is another bully in this game: the Conservative government and its Prime Minister. Members opposite will say that the majority of the forestry industry has agreed to this agreement, so why all the fuss? The reality is that no one in the forestry industry claims that this is good deal but the industry is on the ropes. Keeping in mind flagging lumber prices, a rising dollar and soaring energy costs, in addition to five years of illegal duties, which realistically represents their profits, they cannot afford to fight any longer. An 80% dollar is better than bankruptcy in anyone's eyes.

We also must keep in mind the Prime Minister's ultimatum to accept the deal or the reluctant lumber companies will be on their own in any subsequent legal battles. By the way, the government is withdrawing the loan guarantees provided by the previous Liberal government, loan guarantees that would have kept our lumber companies afloat financially while they reclaim 100% of their money through the legal process.

The lumber industry has been subjected to tremendous pressures, with ministers phoning large companies and MPs phoning small mills with a consistent and blunt message: "take it or leave it, take it or else".

If this were not enough, the Conservative bullies have imposed a 19% levy on all refunded duties deposited on any holdout company. When faced with such punishment from their own government, it is no wonder the majority of the forestry industries are prepared to sign on to this agreement. They have no choice but to give in to such objectionable tactics.

Where do we go from here? As I understand it, the illegal 10.8% combined anti-dumping and countervailing duties levelled by the U.S. will be replaced at current price levels by a 15% Canadian export tax. Can anyone believe that? The export tax is higher than the current U.S. duties under today's market prices. The system is designed to protect U.S. producers from Canadian lumber exports at times of low market prices, when American mills are least able to compete.

Are members baffled by the Conservatives' squeals of delight that this is a great deal for Canada? I am and so are Canadians.

The deal would also cap Canadian exports at 34% of the U.S. lumber market. Our producers now have a quota when there was none before. This will effectively prevent any Canadian growth in the U.S. market. Our very efficient Canadian sawmills that have kept up with technological improvements cannot reap the reward of being on top of their game. So much for free trade.

The Conservative softwood lumber deal will have a negative impact on industry, which will also impact some of the over 55,000 workers in that industry, as well as the resource based communities in which they live. Who will stand up for the nation's forestry workers and these communities?

There is much to criticize in the proposed softwood lumber agreement. The Liberal Party's role is also to offer alternatives.

Our commitment to the softwood lumber industry in a supplementary aid package would have included: \$200 million over two years to enhance the forestry industry's competitive position, improving its environmental performance and taking advantage of

the growing bioeconomy; \$40 million over two years to improve the overall performance of the national forest innovation system; \$30 million over two years to improve the competitiveness of the workforce to promote upgrading of workplace skills and to provide assistance to older workers impacted by forest industry layoffs; \$100 million over two years to support economic diversification and capacity-building in communities affected by job losses in the forestry industry; \$30 million over two years to develop new markets for Canadian wood products; and \$200 million over two years to fight the spread of the pine beetle in B.C. forests.

Notwithstanding strong concerns from the softwood lumber industry, provincial governments, forestry sector workers and resource based communities, the government has rushed into this agreement solely for its own political interests and not for the interests of those adversely impacted by this agreement.

This is why I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the member for Beauséjour to eliminate the punitive tax measure imposed by the bill, as well as the subamendment proposed by the member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

• (1555)

Ms. Helena Guergis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, much of the hon. member's speech was inaccurate. I could in fact come right out and say that it was not true. However, in part of what he said he actually acknowledged what we on this side of the House have known and what that side of the House should know because this dispute has gone for 24 years, which is that the United States and the lumber coalition will never stop with litigation. In fact, they have told us that without this deal they will launch another lawsuit. It could go on forever and ever. With this deal we would have security. We would have seven to nine years with no litigation. Eighty-one per cent of the duties will be returned to the entire industry.

The member also talked about NAFTA. He was at committee when Gordon Ritchie told us that the United States had never intended softwood lumber to be under NAFTA. Perhaps that is why we have had this dispute for so long.

We now have an agreement and within this agreement there is a dispute mechanism that takes it out of U.S. trial law and brings it into international law, which will benefit the industry. We will also work on a binational council for the next seven to nine years to build trust and build a stronger North American softwood lumber industry.

I have a quick question. We know the NDP had the opportunity to do the Liberal-NDP budget and to negotiate with the former prime minister. Could you please let us know whether the NDP actually asked to have anything done on the softwood lumber file?

The Deputy Speaker: I might just remind the parliamentary secretary that she cannot ask a member a question directly. She has to ask the member through the Chair.

Mr. John Maloney: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the last part of her question, I was not privy to the negotiations, if there were any, between the principals of the Liberal Party and the NDP.

Government Orders

The member opposite talks about trust. How can one trust a government or a forestry regime that has no regard for trust? There were seven decisions in Canada's favour and the U.S. ignored them. It has no respect for the rule of law, so why we would trust it otherwise?

We have had security for 24 months, not seven years, not nine years, but 24 months. Perhaps I should not be asking questions but I wonder if the member opposite would go the line as guaranteeing that this agreement will last seven years or nine years. The only guarantee we have is for 24 months.

Twenty per cent of Canada's forestry industry dollars are left in the United States; \$500 million for the very lobby group that started this whole schemozzle and another \$450 million for some meritorious initiatives. Those are Canadian dollars in the United States doing wonderful things. Should we be involved with the United States when there are so many burning issues in Canada? Is our lumber industry there to subsidize the United States in making improvements to that country? I think not.

• (1600)

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the remarks of the member opposite and I have to say that I think he stole some of the words right out of my speech. We tend to agree on how baffling it is that anyone would support this deal and how hard it is for us to explain to people in our ridings that this is a good deal when we all know that it is not.

I talked at great length about how this issue has adversely affected the mills and logging industry in my community. However, what is really baffling to me is how the member could have put a stop to the hearings in Ontario when we hear that he disagrees with this softwood deal.

Mr. John Maloney: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House perceive ourselves as a constructive opposition and we take initiatives and make decisions based on that constructive word.

In fact, hearings on the softwood lumber industry continued through the spring into July and August. Unfortunately, there was a rudimentary agreement initialled by Mr. Harper in April, which was flushed out by a black and white—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Welland knows that he should not be referring to the Prime Minister by name. If he wants to talk about the Prime Minister, that is what the words "Prime Minister" are for.

Mr. John Maloney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A full agreement was signed between the United States and Canada. As far as I was concerned, I did not think it was reasonable to continue with hearings on the agreement when it was a done deal. It was signed and finished. Now we have a new bill that imposes export duties and it is appropriate that we debate it. We may in fact hear from some of the same people.

With respect to the agreement, it is over. To waste money travelling to Quebec, to B.C. or to Ontario with respect to the agreement would not be appropriate. It is appropriate to consider such initiatives, possibly, as we continue the debate on this bill, which I assume will go to committee after second reading stage.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, which I represent in this House, has been particularly affected by the softwood lumber dispute that has been going on for many years. Indeed, forestry operations are the cornerstone of economic development for many municipalities in my riding.

I am talking about the whole area surrounding the town of La Tuque, including obviously Parent, Trois-Rives, Saint-Roch-de-Mékinac and Saint-Joseph-de-Mékinac, Saint-Tite, Sainte-Thècle, Notre-Dame-de-Montauban, Saint-Séverin and Saint-Adelphe—all towns and villages where companies working in the softwood lumber industry are located. I say this to emphasize the extent to which Bill C-24 will have an impact on the future of those communities, on tens of thousands of workers, and the thousands of families that depend on the decisions that we make in this House.

Considering the great importance of this issue for all the people whom I am pledged to properly represent, I decided to carry out my own consultations this past July and August among the various companies affected by the provisions of the softwood lumber agreement that was reached on July 1, 2006, by the international trade ministers of Canada and the United States. I consulted companies such as Abitibi-Consolidated, in particular La Tuque Forestry Products, Shermag, Commonwealth Plywood, Gérard Crête et fils, as well as the Groupe Rétabec. These consultations brought out several points.

First, the softwood lumber industry in general and its companies have been greatly harmed by the countervailing duties imposed by the United States since 2002. Second, the federal government has not provided sufficient support, neither the previous Liberal government nor the Conservative government. There have been no loan guarantees despite all the promises made in recent years, which has further weakened the companies in their dealings with the Americans. Third, many bankruptcies could have been avoided if those loan guarantees had been provided. Fourth, we have won most of the court challenges but the Americans took no account of the decisions in our favour and continued litigation at another level. We won there as well but in the final analysis it was an unending cycle.

For all of these reasons, the lawyers representing many of these companies would have advised their firms not to accept the agreement. However, at the same time—I was told very clearly—the bankers for those same companies told them that they would have to accept this settlement because they were in a precarious financial situation. They desperately needed to quickly recover the funds paid out in countervailing duties, even though they amounted to only 81% of the total paid.

For all these reasons, and even though all the companies I talked to say that this is not necessarily a good agreement—they know it, and I will come back to that—they are asking me to vote for the agreement, because they are barely getting by and any delay could lead to more bankruptcies and more job losses in the short term.

Government Orders

In light of all these factors, I will therefore vote for this bill. But I still want to point out once again that these companies might have made quite a different choice if the Conservative and Liberal governments had supported them properly when they needed support. That would have levelled the playing field and shown the Americans that Quebec and Canadian companies were not in the fight alone.

Now, looking at all of Quebec—not just La Mauricie, as I have just done—I can say beyond all doubt that the situation is the same everywhere. The industry in Quebec is accepting this agreement reluctantly, because it can no longer defend itself. The softwood lumber dispute has weakened the economies of many areas of Quebec. The lack of support from the Liberals and Conservatives has caused many companies to close their doors. Others have declared bankruptcy. Thousands of jobs have been lost. The human drama resulting from these unfortunate situations could have been prevented if only those who had promised loan guarantees had kept their promises.

I said earlier that companies are accepting this bad deal reluctantly. In fact, they feel forced to accept it because, in many cases, they cannot wait any longer.

•(1605)

They are not agreeing gladly to leave so much money—\$1 billion—in the Bush administration's coffers. They are not happy to be accepting an agreement that does nothing to resolve many problems that have plagued the industry for years: lack of investment in research and development, lack of adequate market diversification programs and lack of support for new equipment purchases.

Since this agreement does not solve all the problems, the government will have to make a commitment to put in place a series of measures to mitigate the negative effects caused by this long-lasting dispute in Quebec.

The Bloc Québécois therefore proposes several such measures, including an income support program for older people; an economic diversification program for the communities that depend on forest resources; an increase in the funding for the Canadian model forest program run by Forestry Canada; a special tax status for the 128,000 private woodlot owners in Quebec; special tax treatment for the \$4.3 billion in countervailing and antidumping duties to be refunded by the American authorities so as to take account of the financial damage suffered by these companies; an acceleration in equipment amortization; a program to stimulate innovation in the forest industry and improve its productivity; a market diversification and lumber marketing program; and financial compensation for maintenance of the forest network. It is important for these measures to be put in place as of this fall.

There is another important element to consider in connection with Bill C-24, and that is the monitoring of the much too rigid export quotas currently proposed. In fact the companies will be very limited in their use of unused quotas since the agreement provides that transfers will be limited to just two consecutive months.

In view of the cyclical nature of supply and demand in softwood lumber, such a provision does not at all meet the need for flexibility on the part of both the industry and consumers. This very rigid

aspect of the agreement will have to be relaxed at meetings of the binational council.

In this regard, on June 13, in this House, the Minister of International Trade said to my colleague, the member for Joliette, that the agreement would not contain a rigid cap on export quotas.

I also wish to point out that the duration of the agreement is something else that weakens it, since one clause provides that, after just 18 months, the agreement may be terminated on six months' advance notice.

In short, the agreement will ensure trade peace for three years and will help the industry in the short and medium term, but only in the current context, in which it is on life-support. We note also that the government has given up in this regard since, last summer, it was talking about a firm seven-year agreement.

Furthermore, we have before us a theoretical agreement because it cannot come into effect until all the cases currently before the courts are withdrawn. But if the cases brought before the courts by companies under section 11 of NAFTA are not withdrawn, it means that the agreement is not valid, even if the bill is approved. If this were to happen, the government would very quickly have to put in place a guaranteed loan program, as it has already promised by the way.

In conclusion, I specify that I will vote in favour of bill C-24, not because it is about a sound trade agreement—because in numerous respects, it is quite the opposite—but because the workers of Saint-Maurice—Champlain and the companies who employ them cannot afford to wait any longer.

•(1610)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly do understand the member of Parliament being here to represent specifically the interests of his constituents. Governing is a tough job. Governing is not just short term decision making, it is decision making for the long term.

One of the problems we have to deal with is that this deal is a short term deal. It does not guarantee long term stability in the softwood industry.

We heard yesterday and today about the meanspiritedness of the government, the bullying tactics that it uses. The trade minister told the lumber industry, "Accept this deal or we are going to abandon you. We are going to put penalties and sanctions on you. We are going to berate you until you get on side, or else we are going to make it really difficult for you".

That is meanspiritedness. The member will understand and accept that. He has to fight for the well-being of the industries in his riding, but he also should consider the longer term given that the government can and should continue to support the softwood lumber industry with loan guarantees and other assistance while we get this matter sorted out, a matter which the Conservative minority government made a real mess of.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has reminded me that we should not think just of the people in our own ridings. We do not represent them alone. We should imagine that this is a long-term agreement.

I was saying that I consulted with the companies in my riding. I also compared the results with those for all the companies in Quebec. The responses I got from my riding were that it is a bad agreement but the companies still wanted me to vote in favour of it.

At the same time, the Bloc Québécois was doing its own Quebec-wide consultations. We got the same answer. That is what I said earlier.

Insofar as stability is concerned, one particularly large company that responded to me said that it was true that this was not the best of all deals because the companies would not have the seven years of stability that had been promised, and I agree. We were told in the spring that the deal would ensure seven years of trade peace. The company officials also told me that three years is not a long time but it is enough to enable them to reinvest.

That being said, I take the interests of my voters to heart, as well as those of all Quebecers, all companies in the forest industry, especially softwood lumber.

• (1615)

Mr. Christian Paradis (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too represent a riding in which there are several sawmills, particularly border sawmills.

In general, people are very pleased with the agreement. It is always possible to speculate of course. On one hand, the Liberals did nothing for 13 years, with the result that sawmills now have serious cashflow problems. On the other, my colleague in the Bloc Québécois indulges in speculations about what they could have done. That is to be expected, it is an agreement, it is an out-of-court settlement.

The government did the best it could. When we were in committee, Mr. Guy Chevrette raised some points that were met. Mr. Chevrette himself admitted that these points had been raised and he was pleased with the results. Mr. Pierre-Marc Johnson even told us about the dangers of continuing, because under any procedure at all, the whole thing could collapse. The industry asked us to settle the problem, and we did. I cannot understand, therefore, what my hon. colleague was saying.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Mr. Speaker, I never said that companies were very pleased with this agreement.

My colleague for Mégantic—L'Érable said that the companies in his area are very pleased. I do not agree. That is not what Quebec companies told me. That is not what they told me in my riding. They said that they were extremely disappointed but that they were at the end of their rope and had no other choice.

A CEO told me that although the companies did win all their court cases—and their lawyers would have liked to continue and were advising them to continue—at the other end, their bankers were calling and telling them that there was no alternative. They had come to the end of the road.

The two previous governments created this situation.

[*English*]

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-24, better known as the softwood lumber deal.

From day one, this deal did not feel right to me, from the day the Prime Minister walked into the House in a huff to announce the agreement and then soon after when we saw the incredibly negative industry reaction when all the details were finally exposed. It was, in my opinion, politically motivated. The new Prime Minister of Canada's new government was so anxious to reach a deal at any cost that he was prepared to sacrifice the industry in the process. In his obsession to appear decisive, the Prime Minister seemed prepared to sacrifice one of our most important industries, not to mention the long term viability of the free trade agreement.

NAFTA and WTO judgments had clearly indicated that our industry was not subsidized. Therefore, there was no reason to capitulate on this very important principle. In fact, most experts felt that the U.S. would have exhausted all appeals within a one year period.

What message does this give to other Canadian industries involved in disputes under the free trade agreement? Even worse, what message does it give to the U.S.? Although we were winning decision upon decision on this issue at all levels, the Prime Minister still caved in and essentially sold out the softwood industry.

As members can imagine, the softwood sector is a very competitive sector. The \$1 billion that the new government has taken from it and surrendered to its U.S. competitors will create long term hardships beyond belief.

I listened to a Conservative colleague yesterday speak to the fact that once the U.S. returned the \$4 billion illegally taken from the industry, many in the forestry industry would be able to reinvest these sums in their businesses. They would be able to buy new equipment and expand for the future. My understanding is that most of the smaller softwood producers are going through extremely difficult times, and expansion is the furthest thing from their minds.

What bothers me, given the reality of the situation, is the \$1 billion that these companies will never see and the lost opportunities for these companies to use this money, their money, to reinvest and modernize their facilities and improve their competitiveness in the world market. One billion dollars has been left on the table, wasted, in this most competitive of markets. I am not even talking about the interest on these funds, and I have not heard any answers from our Conservative colleagues on what happened to that interest. From my experience here, it is still a mystery.

Government Orders

Second, and even sadder, is that \$500 million of these funds will go to their direct competitors to continue the harassment of our Canadian softwood businesses. It is a terrible precedent to have set, and it opens up the door to other bad decisions in other sectors. The Americans, who have always tested our mettle on these issues to see what we are made of, now know that the government will abandon its industries when the going gets tough.

Members need not take my word for it. Members may know that northern Manitoba has a substantial softwood lumber industry. Chris Parlow, president of the United Steelworkers, Local 1-324, denounced the agreement with the U.S., stating:

[The Prime Minister] has done nothing in this effort to meet with Canadian workers and hear us. What do we have for all our wins at NAFTA, WTO, US Court of International Trade? We have won every stage of this dispute, only to have the US say they won't recognize the rulings.

Speaking of not supporting our softwood industry, yesterday during debate I heard another Conservative member of Parliament say that we received the best deal possible. There is one element that he forgot to mention, and that is the new government did not offer a temporary aid package, as was provided by the past Liberal government. This aid package, which included \$900 million in loan guarantees, was essential in allowing our local softwood businesses to survive in the interim.

We were also committed to \$600 million of adjustment measures. I think it is important to explain what these funds were for, since it had been done in close collaboration with industry representatives and focused on their most basic needs. Frankly, we still feel these measures would be necessary under any circumstances even if this flawed deal is passed.

I know my colleague a few minutes ago enumerated these measures, but I they are important enough to repeat. It is an important part of what we had proposed, and it would have allowed the industry to survive on a temporary basis until we received the final decisions from the courts.

We had committed \$200 million over two years to enhance the forest industry's competitive position, improve its environmental performance, and take advantage of the growing bio-economy.

● (1620)

We were proposing \$40 million over two years to improve the overall performance of the national forest innovation system; \$30 million over two years to improve competitiveness of the workforce, promote upgrading of workforce skills and provide assistance to older workers impacted by forestry industry lay-offs; \$100 million over two years to support economic diversification and capacity building in communities affected by job losses in the forest industry; \$30 million over two years to develop new markets for Canadian wood products; and \$200 million over two years to fight the spread of the pine beetle in B.C. forests.

As we see, to add insult to injury, Canada's new government just cut funding to the pine beetle program. If one has been through this area of B.C. in the last little while, one cannot understand this type of logic.

This financial package was intended to carry the industry through while the appeals moved forward.

The previous government and industry stakeholders seemed very confident that the final decisions would favour the Canadian softwood industry. The fact that the Conservatives would not even provide the industry with the option of a temporary aid package is very sad indeed. Without this option, the industry was forced to capitulate and take the deal even if it considered it totally unacceptable.

If the Conservatives were so confident, as they seem to be today, that this is such a great deal, why did they not offer a similar package and allow the stakeholders to decide on whether they wished to take the financial package and wait for a final decision by the panels or take the deal that leaves over \$1 billion on the American table? It seems to me this oxygen should have been provided to the industry by the new government, but no, it was take it or leave it. It is quite obvious that the bulk of Canadian businesses accepted the deal while holding their collective noses.

It is wrong. It is a bad deal. It sets a terrible precedent. It leaves over \$1 billion in American hands to better compete with our softwood industry and, even worse, to provide the U.S. softwood lobby a huge amount of money to undermine one of the most vital sectors in our country.

For all those reasons, I cannot in good conscience support this deal.

● (1625)

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member opposite is about the hearings that were supposed to go forward. I just heard from his hon. colleague that he felt they were a waste of time.

Does the member agree with his colleague, that hearing from Canadians on the devastation and the negative impacts of this softwood lumber deal is a waste of time?

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Speaker, consulting Canadians is never a waste of time. In my experience it has been one of the successes of this party. If anyone is known for being in touch with Canadians, it is the Liberal Party.

With regard to the hearings, my colleague said that maybe it was not appropriate at the time. We consulted the industry and ended up with a \$600 million package that was focused on exactly what it needed.

If we are talking about consultation with the industry, we have done it. The \$600 million package addressed its needs precisely. If anyone has consulted the industry, it is us.

The fact that the Conservative government would not even offer this option to industry, in the interim, until it probably came to a successful conclusion within a one year period is totally unacceptable.

Government Orders

Ms. Helena Guergis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the hon. member talk about litigation and how we are on the verge of winning one more case and then all of a sudden it is all going to be fine and dandy, that we are going to have a great relationship with the United States and the softwood lumber industry will flourish.

Nothing could be further from the truth. This has gone on for 24 years, the last lawsuit for five years alone. Without this deal, it has been said to us very clearly by the U.S. lumber coalition that it will not end. Without this deal, there will be litigation after litigation. It will go on forever.

Our industry is at a state because of the lack of support from the previous Liberal government for 13 years. It did not do loan guarantees. It did nothing for the industry. It was content with 100% of nothing for the industry.

The industry is trying to hold its head above water right now. It is our Prime Minister and our Minister of International Trade who secured a far better deal than anything the previous Liberal government had on the table. We know that because our minister used to be theirs and now he is over here. Because of the leadership of our Prime Minister, he was able to secure a deal to help the industry survive.

The hon. member is not being truthful in some of his comments.

I asked one of his colleagues earlier, if he could let us know if he had any insight. I can recall when we had the Liberal-NDP budget. The NDP members could basically ask for anything that they wanted, anything that was of most importance to them. I do not think they asked for anything for the softwood lumber industry then. Shame on them.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if it is an opposition member speaking or the cheering section for the Prime Minister, and I am not even sure there was a question.

However, if there is absolutely no possibility of reaching a deal in a reasonable amount of time, why would the Conservatives sign a deal with these people whom they do not trust, whom they do not think would honour any agreement?

The hon. member says that the Conservatives have signed a long term deal with these people, when in fact we all know that there is a clause after two years. The odds are very good that the industry will once again not honour its obligations and probably break its deal with the Canadian industry.

My feeling is that the Conservatives have surrendered this package to the Americans. It does not surprise me. When we think about it, everything else they are doing in every other policy statement is very close to what Mr. Bush is proposing. It does not surprise me one bit that these people would collaborate with the U.S. on this deal. The fact is that most experts do say that we were very close to a resolution. We were probably a year away from a resolution, but what was missing, as I said before, was a package to tide over the industry for another year or so. This has been repeated all over the place.

When I have listened to my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois, who have approved the deal, they are doing it with a certain

reticence. There is no doubt about that. They do not believe the industry is well served with this deal. I think they also believe, like us, that the industry was forced into it under enormous pressure because of the fiscal needs of the industry in Canada.

• (1630)

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today, as the member for Surrey North, to talk about what this agreement means to my riding.

Most people tend to think of the softwood lumber agreement as being more of interest to an interior area or a coastal area, but I live in an urban area and I know that within my constituency of Surrey North and within all of Surrey there are many IWA or steel IWA workers who are currently out of work and there are more who will be out of work. These are people who spent their lives working in the forest industry and are now losing their homes. They must move their children to different schools. Their self-respect as workers has been destroyed and their lives have been irrevocably changed. This agreement will not, in any way, help the people who are living in Surrey North or in Surrey in general.

We do not have one mill left on the Fraser River, all the way from New Westminster to Surrey and up the coast. The last mill closed a little over six months ago. This was the end of an era.

When these negotiations began, those workers, who were about to be displaced, had hope that perhaps this would make a difference for them, but this agreement has not. The \$1 billion that has been left on the table like Monopoly money is of no benefit to these workers at all.

I know the forest industries have been pushed or strongly encouraged to support a deal that they do not really want to support but they have no choice. However, if we were to actually go out and do some consultations with the other people who are affected by the softwood industry, we would hear something very different.

What should be happening to the \$1 billion that has been left on the table? Fifty-five per cent of all the wood in Canada is actually in British Columbia. In British Columbia, this is not just a small piece of an overall job base, revenue base or natural resource base. Now that the agreement has been signed, the money that will come back to British Columbia, as an example, will go into government revenue. How does that help displaced workers? It does not.

• (1635)

Many of these workers are no longer young and it would not be easy for them to change careers. Many of them are between 45 and 55 years of age. This money should be targeted to mitigation. It should be targeted toward job retraining. It should be targeted toward those communities that have been absolutely devastated economically by what we have already seen in the forest industry.

The fact that we cut down logs in British Columbia and then we export raw logs to other places to have a product made, surely the money coming back should be targeted toward value added industry and toward mitigating for workers and for communities.

Government Orders

We should remember that in every community where there are displaced forest workers, generally male but not always as a few women work in the forest industry, the other ancillary businesses in the community start to close. It is not just the worker who is affected. It is the worker's spouse or partner. It is the worker's children who may have to move away from the town and go to another school. It is the spouse who has lost the job when the ancillary business closed. The money that will be coming back to British Columbia should be going into the communities but it is not. It is going into government revenue. It could be used for anything and that is not right. It is not in any way a fair deal for British Columbia or for other forest dependent areas in this country.

I do not support this deal and I know many other people do not. I think many of the people who will be standing up to support it will be doing so either reluctantly or for other reasons on which I will not speculate, but may not be doing it because they are in full support of it.

As a whole, this House of Parliament and certainly some of the industries in British Columbia may have said yes, but the population is overwhelming in its rejection of this deal that has been negotiated. I think many people will be giving this deal simply tacit support and I am not sure that is the way we want to do this.

The other concern I have is that the agreement should give some long term hope to the softwood industry. However, if this agreement can be reopened in 18 months time, how much long term reassurance is there in that? Is someone going to buy a house and take out a mortgage knowing that this can be reopened in 18 months? I do not think so. Is someone going to make permanent future plans for themselves or their families based on the fact that this can be reopened that quickly? I think not.

In many ways we have the worst of all worlds in this. We have money coming back that will not be targeted to the workers, to the communities and to building healthy forests again. People have been very clear that healthy forests are part of what needs to happen in that mitigation.

• (1640)

I do not support the bill because workers across the country in the softwood lumber industry will be devastated by this. It is not fair, it is not right and it will not help British Columbians.

The Deputy Speaker: Before proceeding to questions and comments, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Etobicoke North, natural resources.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again I have listened to a speech from a member of the NDP and its position simply does not make sense. My colleague speaks about the B.C. softwood lumber industry and the challenges it has had to face over the past decade. She speaks of plant closures, layoffs, displaced workers and the impact this has had on families. We know that and we agree with it.

However, I would ask my colleague to view this logically. All of that has come about because there has been no softwood lumber agreement. What has the lumber industry had to deal with? It has had

to deal with high export duties, high legal costs and endless litigation, and I mean endless litigation. The consequences of the industry having to deal with those things were the very things the member spoke about: plant closures, layoffs, displaced workers, unemployment and a negative effect on families.

What surprises me is that the NDP position is not to change anything and to fight the softwood lumber agreement that offers stability to the market. This is what the softwood lumber companies see. They see stability in the softwood lumber agreement, which is what the industry needs.

The softwood lumber agreement will be in effect for seven years and can be extended for another two years. It will return over \$4 billion to the industry, which is huge. This is the type of stability that the softwood lumber industry needs. When I sat in committee that is what I heard from the companies. They need this money to rebuild their capital, to invest in their workers and to invest in their industry.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Mr. Speaker, I should tell the hon. member one of the reasons that the NDP oppose the agreement. Yes, there have been court challenges but Canada has won each time. To give away wins in order to get this agreement when the courts have said Canada is not subsidizing is a very foolish thing to do.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member share my fears that a great number of these smaller operators have been forced to sign on to this agreement because the banks are threatening to call in their letters of credit and if they do not sign on they will not get back their money to pay the banks; with that being done and some export taxes being applied, that their level of profitability will go down and soon they will find themselves in difficulty again; that the banks will no longer extend credit to them because they will know there is nothing more coming from the U.S.; that the industry will have zero support from the Conservative government; and that we will see an accelerated rate of closures of small and medium size mills throughout our country, all the responsibility of the Conservative Government of Canada?

Ms. Penny Priddy: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that British Columbia has a number of very large forest companies but there are small family owned companies, particularly in the interior of British Columbia, that already find themselves facing those kinds of challenges. They will continue to and in the end not be able to put forward a business case that will allow the bank to extend them any leeway or credit when push comes to shove.

• (1645)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member from Erie gave a speech earlier and asked the rhetorical question, how can we trust this government? That is what it really comes down to, I think. This is the government that just cut programs, as we know, for very vulnerable people in our society, for women, for youth, for aboriginals, et cetera.

But this softwood deal should have been a foreshadowing, I believe, of what we saw in those cuts. Let us look at the Draconian measures the industry minister presented to the softwood industry to get the companies onside, such as threatening to withdraw loan guarantees and saying that the government would not stand with them if they decided to proceed with judicial proceedings.

Government Orders

Does the member have some comments? Is this not a Draconian, meanspirited government or what?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Surrey North, very briefly.

Ms. Penny Priddy: Mr. Speaker, I will answer with just one example to my colleague's question. Many of the people in the forest industry, and I say this without any judgment, do not have a very high degree of literacy. They have gone directly into the forest industry as young men and do not have a high degree of literacy. What do we see cut? Adult literacy. So where on earth are these workers going to be?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am both pleased and saddened to take part in this debate because ultimately the bill that is now before us is a total abdication of Canadian sovereignty, a complete rejection of the rules of international law.

This government totally surrendered to the Americans. Then, in an attempt to justify their surrender, the Conservatives put a gun to the head of different Canadian firms by telling them they would receive no support.

Worse still, they have also been the accomplices of the banks because they wanted to finish the job. The only winners under this agreement are the banks who will all collect the \$4 billion when the deal is done. The other winners, of course, are the American producers.

I notice in particular the support of the Bloc Québécois. Earlier, I heard the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain state that they had proposed such and such a measure, but they have given their unconditional support to the Conservative government while forgetting the workers and communities concerned. That is how they are propping up the government. They have decided to lie down in submission to save their positions rather than saving the communities and workers.

On the subject of older workers, they had a golden opportunity to say to this government, "We will support you provided that you introduce a program for older workers". They could have held the government hostage. They decided to ask for nothing. Instead of finding solutions for older workers, they prefer to ask questions. The next day, after announcing their support for the government, they were pathetic. Having already sold their weapons cheaply, they were asking, "What are you going to do for older workers? What are you going to do for communities?"

What is there for workers in all this? Take a 58-year-old logger from Saint-Fulgence, who has lost his job; what is there for him? What is there for the person who has worked all his life in the forest industry and who had hoped this agreement would do something for his company? It will do nothing. He wondered if anyone thought about him, because all the great speeches were about the workers. There is nothing for him. He is being told, "Take the rest of your UI benefits, after that, you are on your own".

There was an opportunity. In the Liberal program, which was defeated by the Bloc Québécois, there was \$200 million over two years for making our forest industry more competitive and environmentally friendly. There was \$40 million over two years

for improving the general performance of our innovative national forest management system. There were millions of dollars for enhancing the competitiveness of our work force, for workplace skill development, and for assisting older workers in the forest industry who had been laid off. There was also \$100 million for economic diversification.

Will this deal make any mills re-open? Has anyone heard any re-opening announcements since it was signed? All that I have heard are closing announcements. If there were so much confidence in this announcement and if the deal generated as much hope as the government representatives would have us believe, why is it that, day after day, there are closing announcements in towns all across the country?

It is sad for single-industry communities that have no hope of diversifying and that got zero, especially in the parts of rural Quebec represented by Bloc members, who did nothing to take care of them.

● (1650)

All that older workers got are speeches. I want to pay tribute in this regard to the NDP: when they were in the same kind of situation, with the same amount of leverage, they used it to protect the people in whom they believed. The Bloc did nothing. It claims to have leverage. It had the slogan "le vrai pouvoir". But the only real power it used was sucking up to the government.

The feeling we have today in the House is one of immense sadness. Single-industry communities in which everything closed down will not take heart from this. All there is for older workers is the end of their employment insurance benefits and then the shame of not being able to have a decent retirement.

The House should put itself in the shoes of this 58-year-old man. What is he being offered in Saint-Fulgence? Here everyone lives comfortably and has hope for the future. But the House should put itself in the shoes of these people who worked in the forest. There is nothing for them in this deal. There is nothing, I say, except despair.

Therefore we have decided to vote against this agreement not just because of its content, but also because of what it does not contain. There is no related measure. Even the Speech from the Throne included somewhat of a paragraph to appease the Bloc a little, but in the end there is nothing concrete.

I maintain that a year from now, when we are on the other side of this House, we will take stock of this agreement and see how many jobs were created and which communities had to close and we will see that this agreement was bad for Canada, bad for companies, bad for workers and bad for the communities.

That is why we, the members of the Liberal party, have decided to vote against this agreement. We are convinced that after winning all its court challenges in front of international tribunals Canada was right. If the industry had received help from this government, it would not have needed to give in to the government's threats or its bankers' threats. That is what is so sad in all this. Not a single entrepreneur in Canada is happy with this agreement. It was shoved down their throat out of necessity. But let us ask the question. I come back to that because our mandate here is not just to protect big business. We are here to protect the average person. I am still waiting for someone to give me some good news on this agreement.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, this agreement is regrettable not only because of its content, which is a complete abdication, but also because of the lack of related measures. We know full well that this will not resolve anything for those already affected or for countless others who will be once the sector is restructured. The reality is that this sector will have to be restructured and several people will be sacrificed and will pay the price. It is not the major players or the banks who will pay, but the workers for whom there is nothing here.

• (1655)

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the member for Outremont was one of the members of the previous Liberal government who, when in power, applauded the Minister of International Trade for refusing to help companies survive, applauded the Minister of Human Resources for refusing to accept the independent employment insurance fund and POWA, and applauded the Minister of International Trade when he refused to acknowledge that companies needed loan guarantees in order to stay alive during the negotiations. The current Minister of International Trade crossed the floor and has used the same strategy; he helped the oil companies—as did the member for Outremont's leader—by lowering their taxes rather than providing aid to forestry companies.

Did they consult Quebec companies before deciding to vote against the agreement? How much longer could the companies have lasted without government assistance? They must be pleased with what happened to the Bloc Québécois, because together with the NDP they now hold the balance of power. They have joined forces to defeat the government so let them all be present for the vote and let them defeat it.

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for his question and his remarks. Nevertheless, I believe he is having some vision problems. The history surrounding this issue is quite simple.

With respect to measures supporting businesses and workers, last November, when he was Minister of Industry, the current Minister of International Trade made an important announcement about major programs amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars. The only reason these programs were not implemented is that, for partisan reasons, the Bloc Québécois decided to bring down the Liberal government. It is clear that, if the Bloc had not brought down the government, these programs would be up and running today, and we would not have to worry about businesses surviving.

The interesting part of this story is that, for partisan reasons, the Bloc Québécois did not care at all about what might happen to workers and the industry. It cancelled the very program our government prepared in response to its demands and those of workers. The Bloc chose to align itself with people who do not give a damn about workers and industry and who have refused to grant any of their requests.

Despite all that, the members of the Bloc Québécois continue to support the government blindly. I fail to understand this. Why have the Bloc members—who hold the balance of power in this matter—not asked for a thing?

I have never seen a minority government get so much support for so little. This is the cheapest support there has ever been in the entire history of British-style parliamentarism.

The day after they pledged their support, they rose to try to make —

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to stop the member in mid-flight, but there may be other questions and comments.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

• (1700)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I read with great interest this morning that the government released new federal documents that said that the government's top foreign policy priority is to have greater collaboration with Washington.

There is nothing that will foster that collaboration more than walking into negotiations saying, "Here, pick my pockets, take what you want, where do we sign?" Suddenly, we have a much greater collaboration and much closer relationship with the folks in Washington.

However, the member who just made his speech talked about relationships, his concern for workers, his concern for the forestry sector, and the relationships that he values. Yet I wonder, why is he so afraid of actually talking to those workers, talking to the families of those workers, talking to the communities affected, and taking consultations right across the country, so that we just do not listen in the House to what the folks in Washington want, but that we stand up for the working families in this country and do what they have elected us to do.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, the NDP does not have a monopoly on consulting with real people.

When I mention people that will be affected, that includes some of my own family members. We understand the difficulties facing these people, what they go through every day within their families. We have heard it from workers everywhere in Canada and particularly in Quebec. As a member from Quebec, I have greater access to that province. We consulted businesses, we consulted industry. We have been in regular contact with Mr. Chevrette for quite some time, even when we were in power. He even attended a Liberal caucus meeting, the only time in his life.

Lastly, we realize that this agreement does not correspond at all to what communities want, nor what workers want. The only people satisfied are the Americans, who are applauding wildly. Furthermore, bankers are sleeping more soundly, since learning that they can siphon off \$4 billion to reimburse the line of credit that was granted. Later, they will tighten other things up.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot muster any enthusiasm to talk about Bill C-24.

Government Orders

We have heard all sorts of amazing things from hon. members of all stripes in this House. The member for Outremont gave a fine performance. This is probably the first time he has risen with such outrage to defend workers in this House. This is the first time. He used to be a minister and did not rise to defend workers. No, that was not what the member for Outremont did. He was a minister, he made decisions.

That is the reality. The softwood lumber crisis has existed since May 22, 2002, when the Liberals were in power. The member for Outremont was elected in June 2004. What did the minister do? What did the member for Outremont do when he was minister? Absolutely nothing. He said earlier that they were in court and were winning battles. All the while, plants were closing.

Let us not ask ourselves questions. The Conservative Party did not close all the plants; the Liberal Party's decisions closed them. That is what happened. That is the reality.

Clearly, all that time, the Bloc Québécois defended the interests of workers in Quebec in this House. We suggested good ideas and solutions. We were the ones who proposed providing loan guarantees in this House. The Liberal government did not listen to us, and the Conservative government is not listening to us either.

We did not get guarantees. No, there is the program. The member for Outremont refers to the program. All that time, the Liberals were in power and did not implement their program. Did they think that people thought the Liberals were going to implement it to get elected? People did not trust the Liberals. That is the reality. And they were right.

Today, in this House, we are here to defend the interests of workers, who have asked the Bloc Québécois to vote for the agreement because the court case was dragging on too long. The reality is that the companies need money.

We have voted, we are voting and we will vote to defend the agreement, for the simple reason that the forest industry is in crisis and it needs the money, because the Liberal Party did not come to its assistance when it was time to do so. It did not create loan guarantees. The Conservative Party is repeating the same mistake of not helping the companies. It decided to sign a cut-rate agreement. Everyone says so, including the industry. This is not really the ideal agreement. The problem is that the companies have had it and, before they all close down, obviously we are going to keep the existing plants alive and we will hope to work together to try and reopen the ones that have closed.

That is the reality. This is why Quebeckers can rely on the Bloc Québécois to defend their interests. They cannot rely on the Liberals, who spend their time in court trying to defend and win and do what they have always done, that is, not give anything to the industry, telling it to keep on hoping it will win the final battle, the last case.

Cases have been won every year. We win one but it does not put anything more in the workers' pockets. That is the harsh reality for the workers.

The 147 companies out of 151 who called the Bloc Québécois to ask it to vote in favour of this agreement, which is not a good one, did not do so lightheartedly. We say so quite openly. We have offered

some solutions to improve it. The only problem is that the words "The End" are written on the wall and the Conservative Party has decided not to help the industry. So everyone says that the best thing that can happen is for the money paid by the companies to be refunded, even partially. This is the industry's request, once again.

The only party in Quebec that listens to the workers, to Quebeckers, is the Bloc Québécois. We and the people are in symbiosis. The same cannot be said of the Liberal Party. Thus, we decided to support this agreement, for the sake of the people.

This is why we are here. We will go on battling in the interest of the people. Why? Because we will never be in power.

The hon. member for Outremont's problem might be that he covets power at all cost. That is his problem and the problem of his friend, the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard. Power at all cost, and look what happened: in coveting power at all cost, they lost it, because power is loaned to us, it is not ours to keep. We will always be here, of course to defend the interests of Quebeckers.

We would like to say to the Conservative government that if it has any heart at all—which is a good question with the Conservatives—some excellent topics could be added at the industry's request. We absolutely must resolve the issue of the older worker adjustment program. People between 50 and 55 years of age or more are losing their jobs in the forest industry and deserve our help until they can retire. That is what the Bloc Québécois wants. It is true that there was a tiny opening in the last budget, but we are obviously still waiting. Older workers are still waiting, especially in the forest and textile industries.

• (1705)

This week, the \$2 billion cuts to all the programs—programs for women, aboriginals and the most disadvantaged in our society—showed once again that the Conservative members have no heart.

We want them to listen to what the industry is asking. We want an assistance program for older workers so that people who worked in the forest industry can live decently till they retire. That is what we want. We have already costed this program, and it would not be phenomenal amounts that would shatter the government's expenditures. This has already been raised by the Bloc Québécois. This request is justified for the simple reason that the industry has officially requested it. The Bloc Québécois has always been a strong advocate of this request in the House.

We also want an economic diversification program for communities that are dependent on the forest. We are still waiting for the famous Marshall plan promised by the minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, the hon. member for Jonquière—Alma, if my memory serves. He promised a genuine Marshall plan that would help launch resource-based regions, but all he produced this week was a mouse.

Government Orders

The Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec made a disappointing announcement of \$85 million in recycled money. They took some money from certain programs and they recycled it to try to help the most economically disadvantaged communities. They gave \$85 million while the industry leaves more than a billion dollars in countervailing duties in the United States. The Conservative government offers an \$85 million program spread over four years. We hope it won't be too little, too late. My colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine is quite right to mention this fact. Some \$85 million over four years. That is sad. It is really sad that our communities are not better supported by a Conservative government that is completely insensitive to the problems facing the most disadvantaged communities in our regions.

The problem of regional development is a problem that affects everybody. It is not true that the large urban centres could survive with only head offices, which are often the head offices of companies that are developing resources in our regions. That is the reality. Governments are often out of touch. They think that the population is in the cities and that it is not worth the trouble to invest in our regions. On the contrary, if a great many people live in our cities, it is because we have prosperous regions that support the development of our natural resources, agricultural development and development of our forests. What would we do if we did not have lumber to build our houses? We take pride in building homes, but the lumber comes for our regions. We are glad to eat well; to have good bread and other good things on our tables, but that all comes from our regions. The Conservative Party should not forget that.

We want a real economic diversification program for communities that are forestry dependent. We are still waiting for the great program that the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, the member for Jonquière—Alma, failed to deliver this week.

We also want a special status for the 128,000 owners of private woodlots in Quebec. To maintain the industry, we must have trees. We want a support program to revitalize the industry. If we support private woodlots, we will be supporting the resources that are the basis for the industry. This is an idea put forth by the Bloc Québécois. We expect the Conservative Party to take it seriously.

We want a special tax measure for the \$4.3 billion in countervailing and anti-dumping duties. We must not forget that the companies will receive less money than they paid. They will receive \$4 billion of the \$5 billion; that is 81% of the total. Moreover, because of the increased value of the Canada dollar since 2002, they are incurring a loss. In fact, they will only receive 65% of the 81% that they paid. We are asking for a refundable tax credit so that they can recover those amounts. That is the way Canada can deal with this matter.

Once again, Quebecers can be proud that the Bloc Québécois is defending their interests. It is only with reluctance that we support Bill C-24 and the softwood lumber agreement. We do so in the interest of our fellow citizens, of workers in the forest industry who have asked us to support the bill.

• (1710)

Because, obviously, we are the only party that is really listening to them.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech, which was nearly as fascinating and energetic as the one before it. The only difference between my party and his is that we will eventually come to power, and I hope we can count on his party's support when the time comes.

My question for my hon. colleague is this: Does he think that this bad deal will have a negative impact on other sectors of Canadian industry, such as the agricultural and manufacturing sectors? Will this bad deal lead to other bad deals?

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I am pleased my NDP colleague is asking for our support. It shows that he is aware of the Bloc Québécois' importance in this House. Naturally, we will be delighted to support his party anytime they make good decisions once they are in power.

Can this deal have an impact on other industrial sectors? I should note that the softwood lumber sector does not fall under the free trade agreement. This sector is excluded, which is why the Bloc Québécois has always demanded specific aid programs for this industry. This sector experiences repercussions and, from time to time, is subject to American duties.

Losing jobs in a region inevitably has an impact on the local economy. For single-industry communities, this is obviously very important. Once the dispute has been resolved, the industry will get a breath of fresh air.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member may recall that when the softwood deal came up it was a rush. Again, it was one of these issues where the government had to have an answer quickly. The Prime Minister was not even here for question period. The Conservatives were just doing it and then they tabled it, gave it to the other leaders and said that we were in the House and we had to make a decision.

That deal which was presented to and addressed by the House at that time is not the deal that is represented in Bill C-24. In fact, some of the provisions are there, but the deal has changed substantively. It seems to me that this is not a long term solution to this problem.

In fact, the bill itself only provides a horizon of less than 24 months, and we are going to be right back at it because we have abandoned the dispute resolution mechanism. The government has put the onus on those who want to pursue their legal rights. It has put them under pressure, saying that the government has abandoned them. The Minister of International Trade has said that the industry is going it alone if it does not accept this deal.

Perhaps the member would care to at least comment. I understand that he wants to protect the industry in Quebec, but we really need a long term solution. This bill represents only a short term solution. Is the member going to continue to fight for the rights of the softwood industry after this deal—maybe—goes through?

Government Orders

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, the problem of my Liberal colleague and his party is simple. Once again, they are not in touch with what the public is asking. We are much more pragmatic than that. Of course we are capable of analyzing documents, making legal analyses and other things. The industry is saying they have had it with discussions on legal documents. The only problem is that the Liberal Party does not understand that and it is still wrapped up in discussions on legal documents.

The industry and workers are now saying that time is up. They want their countervailing duties back and even if it is a bad agreement, they want it now. That is why a majority of Quebeckers put their trust in the Bloc Québécois to defend their interests. We have a symbiotic relationship with the people of Quebec. Employers and employees are asking us to sign the agreement and that is what we are doing. We are not overjoyed to do so, just as they are not overjoyed to accept it.

The only problem is that the Liberal Party still has not understood that the legal discussions are over and that it is now time to move on, help the companies, the employees, the men and women who work and who have dedicated their lives to this industry. The Bloc Québécois made this decision to help its people and to stop fighting. As they say, the worst agreement is always better than the best trial. That is what the Bloc Québécois chose together with the industry, employers and employees.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): First of all, I wish to pay tribute to my colleague who just spoke. I think that he is putting us back on the right track as opposed to what we heard previously from the member for Outremont.

Second, I would like to ask a very simple question. Who did the NDP, the Conservatives or the Liberals consult in Quebec? I am under the impression, from what the NDP, the Liberals and the Conservatives are saying, that they did not consult anyone in Quebec. Or, if they did, they were not listening.

I would like my colleague to comment on this.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his question. He is quite right. If the NDP and the Liberals vote against this agreement, despite the appeals from the industry, workers and Quebec citizens, it is because they have not understood and they have not consulted

The Conservative party managed to negotiate a sellout agreement. They did not adopt the plan put forward by the Bloc Québécois. This plan, supported by the industry, called for loan guarantees and tax credits to cover potential losses. The Conservative Party negotiated this agreement, I reiterate, without consulting the industry.

Thus, the Bloc Québécois is the only party that is attuned to and wholeheartedly supports the interests of Quebeckers working in the forestry industry. These people can count on us.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to join this debate. I would like to share with members of this House

the concerns of the United Steelworkers so that they will realize that these are not just casual concerns and how serious this issue is.

The United Steelworkers represent over 280,000 Canadian members, 50,000 of whom work in the forest sector. They know the issue well and they are very serious about their concerns. They truly believe that the deal we are considering is a poor one and that Canadians already had a successful strategy to deal with the U.S. forest industry and administration's unfair and illegal imposition of lumber tariffs and duties in May 2002.

Since then we have shown the Americans that many Canadian sawmills could outcompete them, even with exorbitant duties on our lumber exports. Any recent economic problems firms face have more to do with the rising Canadian dollar than with U.S. protectionist measures. By winning in court, meanwhile, we showed them that the Americans' legal case was groundless and their protectionist measures were illegal.

Canada was winning after all, whether in North American Free Trade Agreement tribunals, the World Trade Organization, or U.S. courts of law. On July 13 the Court of International Trade ruled that the tariffs and duties were illegal, a judgment that simply serves to confirm our views. The U.S. is rapidly exhausting its legal avenues before NAFTA, as witnessed by NAFTA's rejection of American extraordinary challenges appeals. The U.S. is even losing at the WTO, the only body which had previously upheld some of its contentions.

We find it unfortunate, therefore, that the current government is prepared to throw away the advantages we have earned at law and instead decided to saddle the industry with what is clearly a terrible negotiated agreement.

In agreeing to the terms of the current agreement, it appears that the current government has fallen into the trap that Carl Grenier of the Free Trade Lumber Council describes when he observes that Canada has admitted that we are "guilty as charged" of producing subsidized lumber, dumping it on U.S. markets and unfairly harming the U.S. industry. We are therefore prepared to throw ourselves on the Americans' mercy, as Grenier notes.

But Canada is not guilty as charged on any of these counts. We all know that. Successive court rulings continue to prove it.

Nonetheless, for policy reasons known perhaps best to the government but not to Canadians, the government has rushed into this devastating agreement. It did so without proper consultation with affected governments and stakeholders. In spite of commitments to the contrary, the deal was even initiated in Geneva before industry representatives had a chance to comment.

It is, in short, a hastily concluded deal. The steelworkers truly believe that we all, as Canadians, will come to regret it. After all, it is clear that the agreement is severely flawed. Those are the issues that are being pointed out to the government today.

Government Orders

The terms do not provide free access to the U.S. market, in spite of the Prime Minister's claim in the House of Commons on April 28. Canadian exports are capped at 34% of the U.S. lumber market and further trampled by the so-called surge mechanism, a policy which effectively penalizes Canadian producers for efficiency. Meanwhile the U.S. companies continue to have free access to the Canadian raw logs, while third country producers enjoy truly free access to the U.S. market.

The timeline, which has changed dramatically over the course of negotiations since April 27, potentially gives Canada as little as two years of peace, not the seven to nine we were originally offered. We learned that the U.S. would now enjoy preferential rights to abrogate the agreement, yet the \$1 billion price tag remains the same.

The timing is poor, since most industry analysts agree that the U.S. housing market, hot until recently, is now cooling off. That means that from the onset of the agreement, Canadian producers will likely be paying 10% to 15% in export tax, a rate higher than even the current level of U.S. tariffs and duties.

• (1720)

What is in the deal for Canada? As was noted in a submission at the standing committee back on June 19, the steelworkers believe that the only reason to sign off on this agreement is the prospect of getting back a portion of the illegally held money currently held by the U.S. commerce department. They respectfully submit that this is just not a good enough reason to lock Canada into what is really a short term fix that not long from now will permit a renewal of U.S. protectionist measures. Developments since June have merely confirmed this judgment.

After all, although the deal calls for the return of 80% of the illegally taken remissions of Canadian companies, there are still no provisions in the agreement for much needed investment in the Canadian forest sector, even though we have seen a number of recent closures attributed to the lack of sufficient capital formation in Canada.

While many of the plants and their equipment in Canada remain starved for capital, our forest companies have continued to invest profits made in Canada in United States and overseas acquisitions, mergers or outside the sector. Notably, Canadian companies like Canfor, Abitibi, Ainsworth and Interfor have purchased mills in the United States. Steelworkers continue to have major concerns until we move forward.

To this end, there must be commitments that a generous portion of any remissions firms receive from a settlement of the lumber dispute will be reinvested in job creation, worker training and retraining and infrastructure and community adjustment in Canada, not outside Canada.

It is a bitter pill for workers and communities to swallow, for instance, when they learn that while the deal calls for \$500 million in spending on such works in the United States, it calls for not one penny to be invested in Canada. How, they ask, can Canadian firms continue to invest in sawmills in South Carolina, Washington and Oregon, the OSB mills in Minnesota or plants in Maine while plants in this country continue to be closed due to lack of investment and capital? The *Globe and Mail* recently commented:

Underinvestment in the Eastern Canadian forest products industry has been chronic for so long that it would take billions to make the country's pulp and paper mills as modern as those in Scandinavia or South America.

The deal, however, with its abruptly short actual term of peace from U.S. trade actions, even provides the U.S. industry and the Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports with a reward for sponsoring what have now been definitely shown to be illegal trade actions: a \$500 million nest egg with which to finance future harassment, as early as two years from the time this deal goes into effect.

In short, by now it is clear that this agreement does not well serve Canadian interests, whether the interests are of our forest industry, forest sector workers, forest based communities, or Canadian citizens. It provides insufficient value to Canada while offering dangerous incentives to future U.S. trade actions. It does not represent a satisfactory resolution to the lumber trade dispute.

Steelworkers recommend the following course of action. Canada must renounce this agreement. The government and Canadian companies should continue with their legal actions. They urge Canadian companies to not agree to withdraw their legal challenges nor to agree to the payment of funds to the U.S. industry. The government should continue to support the legal actions required to erase fully all possible U.S. legal actions.

In short, the United Steelworkers of Canada urge Canadian companies and governments to set aside selfish interests and clearly stand up for Canada and Canadian interests. We must keep in mind the reality that Canada's forest sector is our leading industry and that it is a major source of jobs.

I have appreciated the opportunity to share the feelings of the United Steelworkers of Canada and to ask the government to rethink this whole deal.

• (1725)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber agreement has dragged on for years, for way too long.

An hon. member: Twenty-four years to be precise.

Mr. Larry Miller: Twenty-four years. It is unbelievable, and the previous government could not seem to deal with it.

The lumber producing provinces across this country, including British Columbia, where the hon. member who is yapping back here is from, the industry, all the small loggers and the large loggers support this. Lumber producers from Quebec and from the east coast benefit big time, as do all the lumber producers in Ontario, or the bulk of them, and the ones from my riding.

I ask the hon. member, how many logging companies are in her riding and how many of those are in support of this agreement?

• (1730)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, my understanding as a member of Parliament is that we are here to represent all of the country and not simply to look at parochial interests in our own riding.

This is an industry that is important and needs our support. We could have had a deal a long time ago. We wanted a good deal. This one is not a good deal. It is not a good deal for Canadians.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

The House resumed from September 21 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, September 21, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in the name of the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Call in the members.

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

• (1805)

(Division No. 35)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	André
Angus	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bagnell
Bains	Barbot
Barnes	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonin
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brown (Oakville)
Brunelle	Byrne
Cardin	Carrier
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dosanjh	Duceppe
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Foleo
Gaudet	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Guimond
Holland	Hubbard
Jennings	Julian

Kadis
Kotto
Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lemay
Lévesque
Lussier
Malhi
Maloney
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McCallum
McGuinty
McTeague
Merasty
Mourani
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nash
Ouellet
Pacetti
Perron
Plamondon
Proulx
Redman
Robillard
Rota
Russell
Savoie
Scott
Siksay
Simard
St-Cyr
St. Amand
Steckle
Stronach
Temelkovski
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Vincent
Wasylcyia-Leis
Wilson— 145

Routine Proceedings

Karygiannis
Laforest
Lapierre
Layton
Lee
Lessard
Loubier
MacAulay
Malo
Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nadeau
Neville
Owen
Paquette
Picard
Priddy
Ratansi
Regan
Rodriguez
Roy
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Silva
Simms
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Stoffer
Szabo
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Valley
Wappel
Wilfert

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Arthur	Baird
Batters	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Doyle	Dykstra
Emerson	Epp
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauson
Lemieux	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie

Private Members' Business

Manning	Mayes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	Oda
Pallister	Paradis
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shipley	Skelton
Smith	Solberg
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Toews
Trost	Turner
Twweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Williams
Yelich — 119	

PAIRED

Members

Bachand	Freeman
Gagnon	Gauthier
Lalonde	Mark
O'Connor	Tilson
Vellacott	Verner — 10

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I declare the motion carried.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 6:05 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]

KYOTO PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House resumed from June 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-288, An Act to ensure Canada meets its global climate change obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I join in the debate around something as important as climate change and our international agreements, and the promise that Canada made to actually abide by the signature we put on paper.

Before getting into the merits or demerits of this particular bill, I think for Canadians watching it is important to set the context of what has happened to the climate change file and what has happened in this country with respect to pollution over the last number of years.

As the Liberals were leaving office there was report after report condemning the actions of Canada in black and white. While the promises had been made by the previous Liberal government to do something about climate change, the numbers were in stark contrast to that promise. While there was a commitment to go 6% below our

1990 levels of greenhouse gas pollution, we have in fact risen 10%, 20%, 25% above those numbers.

The reason this has happened is not for a lack of promises and not for a lack of fanfare. The previous Liberal government was excellent at making announcements. It often had very beautiful crafted posters as a backdrop. It spent inordinate amounts of money on brochures and glossy pamphlets that I am sure ended up in landfills across this country. However, what it could not deliver on and what it could not accomplish was the basic ability to start to change the way Canadians do business and the way that Canadians conduct their economy and their lives.

When we boil the issue of climate change down and the issue of Kyoto down to its bare elements, most often we are talking about the use of energy. We are talking about the production of energy, whether it comes from so-called greener sources, new technologies or we are talking about energies that come from carbon-based sources which this country relies on quite heavily.

It varies from province to province and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It is an important note to Canadians that those provinces that took up the call early on, that took strong and bold initiatives, and I would take British Columbia as an example where I reside, there was a strong and important investment in green energy many decades ago.

It is also important to note that these investments were made by both what we call Conservative and New Democrat governments throughout the province's history to ensure that the energy supply in British Columbia was consistent, stable and did not contribute to the planet's pollution.

Those investments allowed British Columbia to continue to grow and prosper while not contributing to the overall warming of the planet which finally we have established, from all parties in all corners of the House, a confirmed belief in what is known as anthropogenic climate change, that is climate change caused by human activity. This is a reality and it is a problem.

I hearken back to when many of my colleagues from the environment committee were at the committee the day that the forestry sector came before us during the Kyoto hearings and clearly made the connection between both the forest fires which had gone to unprecedented levels in British Columbia in particular and the pine beetle infestation which started in British Columbia and has now gone across the Rockies. These elements were directly linked to what was happening to our climate.

My riding is in northwestern British Columbia and it starts from the coast and moves into the interior. We are quite accustomed to cold winters, particularly in the interior portion of the riding. There are consistently cold winters and stretches of winter that go 30° below and 35° below. This is what would have offset the pine beetle infestation. It is a naturally occurring organism that would have died off if winters had been normal. However, we have been without one of these normal winters for so long that the pine beetle has been allowed to bloom, grow and start to cover areas of the forest that many people in the world would find hard to comprehend.

Private Members' Business

We have to look at the current government's initiatives and intentions when talking about climate change and importantly talking about the way that we produce and use our energy. I recall very clearly the member for Red Deer who last year, in a very similar debate to this one, talked about the Conservatives' climate change plan. I asked him directly when there was an opportunity: Does the Conservative Party of Canada have a climate change plan?

The New Democrats had taken an important stand more than a year and a half ago. It is two years now. We said that we were going to spend some time and our own money on developing a plan and we would cost it out. We were going to take it to the economists, the environmental groups, and work through what a plan would actually look like for Canada to implement and achieve our Kyoto targets. We laid that out for all to see, a challenge to the then Liberal government to react and actually do something rather than just continue to make those glossy brochures and lovely posters, and also a challenge to the other parties in the House to get serious about this.

• (1810)

I remember the member for Red Deer's answer. I know he is extremely committed to the environment and the issue of waste in particular. He said that yes in fact the Conservative Party of Canada had a plan for climate change.

Well, it has been a year and a half or more. We are waiting and we are still waiting. We know that there is a green plan coming. It is important to understand that every day, every week and every month is lost without a plan, and without things that Canadians can actually look to in the true sense of leadership.

Canadians, when polled across the country, are ready to do something about this issue. They are making the choices every day for a better environment, but there has been an absolute lack of leadership on this file at the federal government level in particular.

The provinces have started to react, Quebec in particular and Manitoba. They have said that if the feds are not going to show up, at least they will. This is very similar to what we have seen in the United States where the presidency of George Bush has decided to not follow into the Kyoto regime, or any regime really, when it comes to climate change. Some states that have seen this as a significant issue have gone out and taken the lead.

While this is sometimes necessary, it is a bit unfortunate because the amount of taxation, money collected by the federal government, and the amount of legislative powers that the government has clearly puts us in the driver's seat if we choose to take that leadership role and that has not happened.

We hear recent announcements of the federal government preparing to offer up more than a billion dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money for a pipeline across our north to feed natural gas. Before the Conservatives get too excited and frothing at the mouth about this concept, let us take it from an energy perspective for a moment.

The concept is to take liquefied natural gas from some other far region of the world, liquefy it, put it into tankers, ship it across, put in another pipeline, and then ship that down. Natural gas, for everyone watching and as people know it, is one of our cleanest burning carbon-based fuels. It would then be put into the tar sands

where it takes a barrel and a half to three barrels depending on the use of energy to produce one single barrel of oil, which then gets put into another pipe and then sent down to the United States.

Somehow this equation is a good so-called investment of tax dollars. It is bizarre. At the same time the companies are now making substantial profits. Even when oil is at \$40 a barrel, \$50 a barrel or \$60 a barrel, they are doing quite well.

This government follows in the footsteps of the previous government insisting on handing over a cheque from Canadian taxpayers of \$1.5 billion every year into some of the companies that are enjoying record profits. As one company executive in Calgary a few weeks ago noted, they were obscene.

I have seen those profits and that is all well and good, they are making their money, but I cannot understand for the life of me, and many Canadians get confused by this, why we would also support them with taxpayer dollars while they are doing okay, while they are doing not just okay, they are doing spectacularly well?

Why would we have a corporate welfare cheque cut year in, year out, for companies that are doing fine? We have lots of ideas for the government where true investment can happen, the type of investment Canadians are looking for when it comes to the energy file.

Companies that exist within the tar sands have talked about making them carbon neutral within 20 years. We know the technology is coming forward in this country and in other countries. Rather than be a laggard, rather than simply follow in the wake of other jurisdictions when they take a leadership role in this, there is a real opportunity for Canada to make bold initiatives and plans. We can actually enact those plans and not be handcuffed as the previous government was by being unable to square circles or show a vision and leadership for which Canadians are looking.

When we look to other jurisdictions that have been able to maintain their economies, the Scandinavian countries clearly stand out. Some of the strongest economies in the free world have been able to both achieve significant reductions in their greenhouse gas output while achieving some of the best performing economies anywhere on the planet.

The economy versus the environment debate is as dead as the dinosaurs. We simply cannot refer to it anymore in any serious way.

When Canadians are asked whether they would rather pick up a car at the lot that costs them \$50 to fill up or one that costs them \$10, clearly, particularly Canadians, who do not have a lot of money to throw around, are going to take the option, if it is presented to them in a reasonable way, to allow them to fill up with a little bit less and have money for other things in their lives.

Energy has become such an absolute essential for Canadians that home heating costs, and we have watched the spike in prices, particularly hurt those households that are in the most vulnerable of categories. We can create the economy. The bill goes a small way toward forcing the government to actually abide by international agreements.

Private Members' Business

I know Mr. Harper said in his speech on September 11 that we are a country that always accepted its responsibilities—

• (1815)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. I would remind the hon. member that we do not refer to members of Parliament by name but by riding or title.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that correction. I thank the member from Windsor for his diligence in listening.

On September 11, the Prime Minister said, “Because we are a country that has always accepted its responsibilities in the world... Canada has acted when the United Nations has asked”. The United Nations is the body in which our Kyoto signature actually stands. Clearly, if the Prime Minister is true to his word, then abiding by that signature on that document is what we need to do.

We are supportive of this bill and we will leave it to the Conservatives to answer the inherent ironies that exist within its action.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Honoré-Mercier on his excellent bill.

[*English*]

It is very much a pleasure for me to stand and speak to this issue. In fact, I cannot think of a more pressing or important issue, not only for this nation but for this world.

The fact of the matter is that we are at a tipping point. It is evident not only in our own country, in places like the Arctic, where oral traditions are being rendered useless by a landscape that is dramatically changing, but we also see it in extreme weather, in rapidly receding glaciers and in so many other ways. Mountains that have been snow-capped for incredibly long periods of time, thousands of years, are no longer.

In fact, just yesterday, I believe, a study pointed out that the earth is at its warmest point in 12,000 years. The Conservatives do not want to acknowledge this, but the reality is that climate change is real, it is impacting us today, and action is absolutely a necessity.

When we talk about Canada's role, we know that Canada actually uses more energy than the entire continent of Africa. We know that North America as a whole uses more energy than Africa, Asia and South America combined. When we look at this, it could not be clearer that Kyoto is needed, needed not just in our own context but in the world.

There is only one path to answering the problem of climate change. That path, without a doubt, is international agreements. Kyoto was an opportunity for all countries to come together and try to hash out the first agreement on climate change. If anybody doubts the effectiveness of Kyoto, they need only ask where the issue of climate change was before Kyoto came into effect. It was in the wilderness. The naysayers were dismissing it. People were pretending it was not a reality. Kyoto forced it onto the international stage, and for those who refused to take action and be signatories, there was domestic pressure, as in the case of the United States with states coming forward and taking action.

The previous federal government signed on to Kyoto. We put forward a series of recommendations to reduce our emissions and meet our Kyoto objectives. In the wake of all of this, when Canada's new government, as it calls itself, came into being, what action did it take? The reality is that it stepped back. Instead of moving forward with Kyoto and the recommendations, the government began slashing money.

The Conservatives took programs like the EnerGuide program, which allowed families to get subsidies to retrofit their homes to reduce the amount of energy they needed, and they scrapped them. Across the board, they scrapped environmental and climate change programs.

Worse than that, they walked away from their responsibilities in COP 11. COP 11 was an opportunity and a chance for Canada to lead the successor agreements that would follow Kyoto, to make sure that those nations that did not join on would join on. It was an opportunity for Canada to take a leadership role and the minister was missing in action.

The minister, whenever she is asked a question in the House about the Conservatives' environmental plan, will talk about what? Mercury. This could not be more evidence of how they do not understand this issue. Mercury has nothing to do with climate change. Zero. The minister of mercury talks about mercury every single time they are asked about climate change, when it does nothing. If she does not talk about mercury, the minister talks about smog, which also has nothing to do with climate change. Both are important issues. Of course it is important to reduce mercury and of course it is important to deal with smog, but neither of them have anything to do with climate change.

• (1820)

If that were all, it would be bad enough. Just simply slashing funding and ignoring the issue would be bad enough, but I fear there is a far greater menace afoot. I will read a quote for members, if I may. This is from U.S. pollster Frank Luntz, who recently met with the Prime Minister and gave him advice on how he should proceed. Mr. Luntz said:

Voters believe that there is no consensus about global warming within the scientific community. Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue in the debate....

This is who the Prime Minister decided to spend his time with and to take advice from, an individual who says to distort the facts. The reality is that the scientific evidence on climate change is irrefutable. We can see it in our day to day lives, but scientists have also proven it through their research. We know that no credible paper published in the last number of years has in any way disputed the fact that climate change is a reality.

The government set Mr. Luntz's words into action. The Conservatives made sure they took action. They started by removing the climate change website, a Government of Canada site that had been set up for information for teachers, students and Canadians about how they could reduce their emissions. The government killed this site. I received a call from a teacher who had been using this site in her class to talk to students about how they could reduce their emissions. She tried it one day and found out that it had been deleted.

The government went through the website and cleansed and erased any references to climate change. It tried to pretend climate change does not exist. The Conservative government listened to its Republican advisers and tried to hide the issue from reality.

What Harper had called previously a controversial—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. I have to remind the hon. member that we do not use people's proper names but their titles or ridings.

Mr. Mark Holland: You are quite right, Mr. Speaker.

What the Prime Minister had called a controversial hypothesis and his former critic called a great socialist plot is in fact the greatest menace to this planet, something the government is turning its back on and systematically trying to pretend does not exist.

It gets worse.

Then we find out about the Friends of Science, a group much like the tobacco industry group formed to try to pretend that tobacco is not bad for us. When all the scientific evidence said that tobacco could kill us, Friends of Tobacco came forward and purported to have scientific evidence indicating that it was not bad for us.

In a similar fashion, this group, Friends of Science, was formed. Where did this group get its funding? The funding was set up by an individual by the name of Barry Cooper, a very close associate of the Prime Minister. The objective was to funnel oil money through a system of hiding where it came from to allow it to get to Friends of Science so they could try to create doubt among the population that climate change is real.

It does not end there.

This Friends of Science group has all kinds of connections to the Conservative Party of Canada, from Barry Cooper to Morten Paulsen, Tom Harris, and others. The Conservative Party and Friends of Science are one and the same. This group, which seeks to sell our planet down the river, which seeks to confuse and distort the facts, is closely tied to the Conservatives.

We have to look at what action we must take going forward. It struck me when David Suzuki made a statement saying that the planet does not care whether we continue to exist or we eradicate ourselves. The reality is that we are making our own decisions about whether or not we stay on this planet. It is up to us to find balance. It is up to us to lead the way and ensure that we strike a balance with our planet at a time when, within a generation, our oceans and our trees will be saturated with CO₂ emissions, at a time when permafrost is lifting at an unbelievable pace and releasing more and more CO₂ into the atmosphere, at a time when ice, which is 90% reflective of energy, is turning into water, which is 90% absorbent of

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energy, and at a time when Asia is booming and its CO₂ emissions are increasing day after day.

We do not have a lot of time. We certainly do not have time for a government that distorts the facts, tries to mislead Canadians and does not take action on the issue.

It is imperative that this motion pass. I would say it is imperative that we lead the way and ensure that we deal with the issue of climate change. Our very invitation to stay on this earth depends upon it.

• (1825)

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having listened to that from a Liberal is really quite amazing considering the 13 years that I have been here listening to the promises.

Climate change was identified in 1992. Nothing was done.

In 1997, we signed on to Kyoto. Nothing was done.

In 2002, in Johannesburg, again we identified the problem. Nothing was done.

Here we are in 2006 and that member has the nerve to stand and lecture about what the Liberals have done, when in fact we are 35% above 1990 levels and Canada had agreed to be 6% below 1990 levels. What he cannot possibly imagine is how we could ever achieve that. If he looked at reality, he would see that this is 195 megatonnes of carbon that we would have to remove from the environment. It is not achievable. What does he not understand? We had to start in 1993 and we had to have an aggressive plan to deal with this climate change problem. The previous government did nothing.

Fortunately, at least there are countries that are trying to come up with solutions. I have attended the COP meetings, the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to Kyoto. Those meetings consist of 190 countries. Each of those countries has its own problems, its own social problems, climate problems, et cetera, and we are supposed to come to some sort of agreement on how to solve climate change. It is not happening. It is a dream. It is just a dream.

Fortunately, the G-8 plus five, consisting of the G-8 members plus India, China, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, are coming up with solutions. Fortunately, the Asia-Pacific partnership is looking at solutions. At least, hopefully, someone is going to deal with climate change, but certainly 190 countries are not going to come up with consensus in time and they are not going to achieve their targets.

Why do we have to oppose this bill? We have a number of reasons.

Obviously, this bill would place a huge drain on the administrative part of the government without allowing the government to focus on the actual reductions that are necessary. This bill would oblige the Minister of the Environment to establish an annual climate change plan and to make regulations and would also oblige the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to review the plan and the proposed regulations and submit a report to Parliament.

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Obviously the previous government did not do any of those things. There were no reports. There was no record. Nothing ever happened. There was just a lot of talk.

While this bill would be totally cumbersome and would obviously take a huge amount of resources of the government, we should spend the money on an actual plan, on actually doing things, not dreaming about buying credits from some foreign country and sending them off. No one has been able to explain to me how buying credits from a foreign country is in fact going to help the global environment.

What they do not seem to understand is that air is shared by everyone and that the 556 coal-fired power plants being built in China using soft coal are a huge environmental problem. Let us help them with the technology so they can change. That would make a difference. That would really have some impact. Let us develop that gasification technology here in Canada and then transfer that technology to the developing countries where we could really make a difference. That is positive. That is the sort of positive thing we can do.

We have a bill in front of us that wants us to have more regulations, more government reports and more government planning. I do not have that much faith in government. I have a lot more faith in working with the provinces, in working with industry and in looking to the future and having a long term vision for where we want to go and how we want to deal with the climate change problem. I think that is obviously what Canadians expect us to do.

•(1830)

We need to reduce by 195 megatonnes to get to our target. Most people do not understand what a megatonne is, but basically, as the minister has said in the House, it would mean shutting down transportation, shutting off the lights and stopping everything if we were to achieve that target. It is not possible. Canadians do not want that.

Canadians want a plan from us. They want a plan that will deal with pollution and climate change and with the soil, the water, the land and everything that we do. That is the direction in which we need to go.

We hear from the other side of the House that we need to go after the oil and gas industry but that is not true. We need to rely on the capture and sequestering of CO₂. We need to get into the gasification of everything from garbage to coal, and it is already happening. In some countries they have been doing that for a long time. Norway has been sequestering CO₂ in the caverns underneath the North Sea for 10 years. This is not new technology. It does not need to be developed further. We just need to do it.

The former government did not do it when it was in power. It did not listen to advisers. It finally got down to the desperation \$10 billion, which probably could have been \$80 billion, and said that it would buy foreign carbon credits. Maybe that made the previous government feel better but it is like talking to the city council which says that it recycles plastic, which is wonderful, but where does the plastic go? It gets bundled, sent by ships through the Panama Canal and ends up going to a landfill in China. How does that make everyone feel? That is not really recycling. That is phony and it is

not telling Canadians the truth. Let us get on with telling Canadians truthfully how we can deal with this.

We should be pretty excited about the green plan that is coming and that we will be able to implement. In some of the research Mark Jaccard has done, he says that it could cost Canadians up to \$80 billion to start right now to try to achieve those targets. That is not feasible. It cannot be done so let us get on with the green plan. We do not need to be lectured about what should have happened because, again, we have sat here and watched but nothing has happened.

I was embarrassed at COP 10 in Argentina when the former minister of the environment stood and reported for this country and said that we had the one tonne challenge and that we would hit our targets. The one tonne challenge was designed to take care of 20 megatonnes if it worked. That was all we had to brag about. It was embarrassing when we were listening to other countries say that they were developing wind technology, alternate energies of different kinds, looking at wave technology and so on. We are not leaders in those areas and we should be. The jobs that are related, what we can do for our environment and for the global environment, it is pretty phenomenal.

As a Canadian and a member of Parliament in 2006, the legacy I want to leave is that we took action and we did something about the air, the water and the land. We can do it. Whether it is sequestering or whatever we want to do, we can be leaders and that is what we should aim for.

What we will be getting in the House is a real plan and we will carry it out. It will happen and Canadians will understand that, rather than buying carbon credits from some foreign country, we will be doing things here in Canada that will make a difference and will be transferable to other parts of the world.

We cannot support the bill. We do not think that more regulation and more planning is necessary. We need to take action and that is what we plan to do.

•(1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill tabled on May 17 by the member for Honoré-Mercier would force the government to respect Canada's Kyoto protocol obligations.

It creates an obligation on the department to establish annually a climate change plan that respects shared jurisdictions and proposes regulations to fulfill the Kyoto protocol goals.

It also creates an obligation on the Commissioner of the Environment to review the annual climate change plan and submit a report to Parliament.

We support the principle underlying this bill. In fact, the essence of this bill resembles the motion the Bloc introduced on May 11, which was adopted by a majority of members of the House of Commons. We will present our suggestions for improving the bill during committee.

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Clause 5 of the bill states that the federal government must table a climate change plan not later than May 31 of every year until 2013. The annual plan must respect provincial jurisdiction and include the following five elements: measures to be taken to reduce greenhouse gases; performance standards and market-based mechanisms; a description of spending or fiscal measures or incentives; bilateral agreements; and a report on overall results of the previous year's plan.

Why does the bill not require these climate change action plans to be tabled beyond 2013? Would it not be more appropriate to say that Canada will participate in phase II of the Kyoto protocol, and that the annual report will therefore be an important tool for following through with the fight against climate change?

Clearly, the bill will have to specify that bilateral agreements should be financial agreements that enable provinces wishing to implement the Kyoto protocol to accomplish these goals.

The fight against climate change will be one of the most important global issues in the coming decades. The Kyoto protocol is the product of many years' work and collaboration within the international community, and is the most effective and most complete tool for fighting climate change.

With its recent opposition motion on May 11, the Bloc Québécois sent an unequivocal message to the Conservative government that the government must make a commitment to respect the Kyoto protocol, an international accord to which Canada is legally bound and to which 90% of Quebecers lend their support. If it does not do so, it will cause Canada to lose any credibility it has internationally. Its reputation is at stake. This member's bill bears the same message as the motion put forward by the Bloc in the hope that the Conservatives might understand.

The basic principles underlying the Bloc's position, from the time study of the climate change file began, are based on respect for international commitments, on equity and on respect for Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

The Bloc Québécois is asking Ottawa for a plan to implement the Kyoto protocol, enabling the reduction of Canadian greenhouse gas emissions by 6% over 1990 levels and providing a series of measures within its areas of jurisdiction.

The Bloc is seeking concrete measures in five major areas.

First, we are asking for stricter standards in the manufacture of vehicles with a view to improving the energy efficiency of passenger vehicles and trucks, following the example set by California.

• (1840)

Second, we are asking for discounts on purchases of ecological vehicles, such as hybrid, electric and hydrogen vehicles. Incentives are key.

Third, we also want financial support for the development of renewable energy and we do not want cuts to the incentives for the windmill project.

Fourth, we want the abolition of the advantageous tax system for the oil companies.

Fifth, we are asking for grants to be given to agencies that are contributing to the effort to achieve the objectives of the Kyoto protocol and are helping to educate the public.

Furthermore, the Bloc Québécois wants the plan to include a system of emission objectives for large emitters, along with an exchange of emission rights, since by 2010 these industries, particularly the oil companies, will be responsible for more than 50% of greenhouse gas emissions. An equitable approach, as proposed by the Bloc Québécois, necessarily implies that large emitters be called to contribute according to their emissions.

An equitable approach for the provinces means that those that have made efforts in the past should be recognized accordingly. For example, there is the choice that Quebec made concerning hydro-electricity or the choice certain industries made to reduce their contributions to greenhouse gases, even before the Kyoto protocol.

At this point, it would be good to repeat the content of the Bloc Québécois motion passed in a majority vote—169 to 125—during our opposition day on May 11, 2006. The motion read as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) take the necessary measures to ensure that Canada meets its objective for greenhouse gas reduction established under the Kyoto Protocol, in an equitable manner while respecting the constitutional jurisdictions and responsibilities of Quebec and the provinces; and (b) publish, by October 15, 2006, an effective and equitable plan for complying with the Kyoto Protocol that includes a system of emission objectives for large emitters along with an exchange of emission rights accompanied by a bilateral agreement with Quebec—

The Conservative position regarding the Kyoto protocol is worrisome. So far, they have made it clear that they do not intend to try to reach the target of a 6% reduction compared to 1990. They say that this target is unrealistic and unachievable. I feel this is irresponsible. The Conservative government has been a vocal opponent of Kyoto on the international scene.

To not respect the targets of the Kyoto protocol is to renounce it. The position taken by the Conservatives not only weakens Canada's credibility internationally, but it also runs the risk of raising doubt about the viability and pertinence of negotiating and signing multilateral agreements.

Responsible government means moving beyond a political agenda that is only a few months old. It means creating the necessary conditions to ensure the safety, health and prosperity of citizens for years to come.

• (1845)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I thank the member for Honoré-Mercier for bringing this very important bill before the House. He has done an extraordinary job to bring the issue in clarity. He has argued in the House of the need for a royal recommendation. The member has amplified further on the ways in which we could meet our Kyoto commitments on the reduction of greenhouse gas levels, without the kind of spending the previous Conservative speaker seemed to indicate was absolutely necessary.

Let us have some background.

Private Members' Business

After millions of years of remaining constant, greenhouse gas levels, particularly CO₂, started to climb sharply at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Greenhouses gas levels are now almost certainly higher than they have been in 20 million years. This is not a natural fluctuation. It is a side effect of the greenhouse gases being trapped in the atmosphere, much like a giant greenhouse. The heating is called global warming, and we are talking about that.

Global warming has already reduced the depth of the winter polar ice caps since the 1970s by 40%. Polar bears will become extinct if the ice retreat continues, and 90% of all glaciers on the planet have retreated significantly in the last 50 years. As the white reflective snow melts, which is even more efficient at absorbing solar energy, this causes acceleration of the heat effect.

“So what”, some people would say. “Who likes snow and ice?” Let us consider some facts.

The computer models show that up to a metre sea level rise over the next 100 years. More heat means more energy in the atmosphere. That means more turbulent weather. Have we seen more turbulent weather? Already I think we can agree. Super hurricanes will cause millions if not billions of dollars in property damage. Witness what happened in New Orleans.

More heat means a redistribution of rain patterns. We are now seeing freakish storms all over the world, which may dump many feet of water in a single day. We have seen many examples of that already. Does this have something to do with global warming? Probably.

This also means drought in places that previously had abundant rainfall. Does anyone realize what happened in B.C.? The province went for something like almost a month without rain in the Vancouver area. I was there for about a week and everything was dry. Stanley Park was dry. It has never been like that. Something is happening. We may deny the science, but we cannot deny the reality.

Because of these freakish storms, we have droughts in certain places. At a prime time in our history, Canada had to actually import grain because of droughts. For the first time in our history, rainy Vancouver's drinking water reservoirs are almost empty.

Would it not be nice to live in a warmer climate? What is wrong with that? There are at least three drawbacks.

First, we may find that we have to run our air conditioners all year round. We will be using all the extra electricity to run air conditioners. By the law of supply and demand, electricity prices will go through the roof and we may find ourselves unable to afford or run an air conditioner.

With higher temperatures, water evaporates more quickly. Global warming disrupts rainfall patterns, bringing extra rain to some places and drought in others. For those in the drought, tap water will have to be brought in. That means higher water bills. It also means skyrocketing food costs, since farmers need huge amounts of water for irrigation. Every degree rise in temperature requires 10% more water.

If people live in Alberta or Saskatchewan or if they live in the Ganges River valley, their tap water comes from glacier melt water.

Those regions will experience summer water shortages. It is absolutely a fact.

The trees cannot pack up and move either to a cooler climate. We lost many of our grand fir trees in the summer of 2002 due to heat and drought. We pretty well had to cut them down and replant a new heat tolerant species to deal with it. It will take at least a generation for the newly planted forest to mature.

The Kyoto protocol is an agreement under which industrialized countries will reduce their collective emissions of greenhouse gases by 5.2% compared to what we had in 1990. Note that compared to the emission levels that would be expected by 2010 without the Kyoto Protocol, this target represents a 29% cut. The goal is lower overall emissions of six greenhouse gases. They include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, sulphurhexafluoride, HFCs and PFCs calculated as an average over the five year period 2008 and 2012.

● (1850)

National targets range from 8% reductions for the European Union to permit increases of 8% in places like Australia. Not everybody has the same problem. Other countries like India and China, which have ratified the protocol, are not required to reduce carbon emissions under the present agreement for certain particular reasons, which I will not go into. However, the objective of the overall protocol is the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous interference with our climate system. It is all about that.

The treaty was negotiated in Kyoto, Japan in December 1997, opened for signature on March 16, 1998 and closed on March 15, 1999. The agreement came into force on February 16, 2005. As of April 2006, a total of 163 countries have ratified the agreement, representing over 61.6% of emissions.

On December 17, 2002, Canada ratified the treaty. While numerous polls have shown support for the Kyoto protocol, somewhere around 70%, there is still some opposition, and I know where it is. It is in the Conservative caucus.

If we think about it, there are some business groups and non-governmental clients with energy concerns using similar arguments to those being used in the United States, which has not signed on to the Kyoto protocol. I think it has something to do with its tremendous reliance on coal-fired plants, particularly in the Ohio Valley.

The United States is not prepared to make that commitment and it has not made any plans to deal with Kyoto. It seems to me that the American administration on the other side here feels it is better to go with George Bush than it is to deal with this matter in Canada.

In 2005 the result was limited to an ongoing war of words, primarily between the government and Alberta, which is Canada's primary oil and gas producer. I must admit that the Conservatives, in opposing Kyoto, talked about a made in Canada solution. However, we have to ask ourselves this. Can we find anywhere in the record any mention of how they will address the high emitters such as the petroleum gas industry and the oil sands? They have not mentioned it. This is where their key support is, and I understand it. That is politics.

However, we are the Parliament of Canada. This is the Government of Canada. It has to speak on behalf of the interests of all Canadians, not simply the supporters of the Conservatives, which is exactly what they did in terms of the funding cuts they just made.

We should look at it. When we look at it line by line, there is no question about it. It was who were unlikely to be Conservative supporters and they were zapped. It is all tied in with this whole meangspirited government that has no interest whatsoever in good policy. It is an ideological government that has absolutely no interest whatsoever in what makes good public policy on behalf of Canadians.

After the January election, the Conservative minority government expressed opposition to Kyoto and announced that Canada would have no chance of meeting its targets under it. However, when we signed this deal, we knew we were already behind. We signed it knowing that, because we still knew it was possible to meet our target under Kyoto.

I could go on in this matter, but the Kyoto protocol, which is supported by the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals, is there. It has nothing to do with partisanship. It has to do with our serious concerns and our understanding of the science, that climate change is a risk to humanity and we must take action. The Conservative government has refused to do that and is dismantling everything that has been done so far in dealing with greenhouse gases. Shame on it.

• (1855)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a new member in the House and I represent the riding of Louis-Hébert.

Since my arrival, I have tried to remain objective in my work and to leave partisan politics aside. Today, we heard the Liberal presentation. They managed to increase greenhouse gas emissions by 35%. We were told of the extinction of polar bears. We were told about the problems out West and about insects that eat pine trees. We have been in power for six months. My colleague has given an account of the Liberal legacy.

To achieve the Kyoto targets, we have to reduce gases by 195 megatonnes. That means 195 million tonnes which, even at \$10 per tonne, works out to about \$19 billion sent abroad. What should be understood is that the Kyoto protocol does not reduce greenhouse gases, but allows us to purchase abroad the right to pollute. That changes nothing in my neighbourhood. It does not prevent individuals from developing emphysema, or seniors and youth from suffering from asthma. They continue to be affected by these gases

Private Members' Business

and smog. That is the Liberals' legacy and we are trying to address the situation.

Earlier, we heard a statement that was almost scientific. This summer, I was in Chicoutimi, at the Monts-Valin interpretation centre. The staff of the centre explained to me that 10,000 years ago, 1,000 feet of ice covered the place where I was walking. That ice did not melt away in the past 100 years. It melted over the course of thousands of years; long before industrial activity could influence the melting of that ice. There are cycles of glaciation and cycles of melting. What stage are we at now? I met with some scientists and even their opinions are divided. Some think one way, others have a different opinion.

Our government is proposing today—or rather will be proposing over the next few days—a new green plan that will really seek to improve the situation. It will not be window dressing in the style of the Liberals. It will not be more posturing. It will be real action.

There is something that I would like my Liberal friends to explain. The former Liberal Minister of the Environment claims that it is impossible to meet the objectives of the Kyoto protocol. How is it that the Liberals continue to support a program whose objectives are impossible to meet, as the former minister says?

We hear it said that to be in favour of the Kyoto protocol means to be in favour of the environment. That is completely false. The Kyoto protocol is a protocol for the purchase and transfer of carbon credits. That is what we have to understand. It is unhealthy. It is soapbox oratory to try to make people believe that the Kyoto protocol is the solution to environmental problems in Quebec and across Canada. The purchase of carbon credits from Cameroon will make no difference to young people with respiratory problems or to older persons. To say otherwise is mere posturing.

• (1900)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier has a five minute right of reply.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we knew that the Conservatives did not like Kyoto, that they hated Kyoto. It has been proved that they have absolutely no understanding of Kyoto—not like you, of course, Mr. Speaker. I mean the people who spoke here today. They do not understand Kyoto.

My first words are to thank my hon. colleagues who spoke or expressed their support in one way or another for this important bill. I thank my hon. colleagues in the Liberal Party as well as in the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party.

[English]

The support from all the opposition parties shows in the clearest possible way that protecting the environment and fighting climate change cannot and must not become a partisan issue.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

All the parties are forming a common front to face the major challenges posed by climate change—all the parties except the Conservative Party.

For ideological reasons, the Conservative government is doing everything in its power to derail Kyoto. That is why the government tried to kill this bill using procedural questions. It tried to say that the bill would need a royal recommendation, which is obviously false. You confirmed that today, Mr. Speaker.

Allow me to provide a brief reminder about this important bill. Its objective is simple, very simple: to ensure that Canada meets its obligations under the Kyoto protocol. Its purpose is therefore to ensure that Canada complies with international law in this area.

In short, the bill would require the Minister of the Environment to prepare a climate change plan every year containing in particular a description of the measures to be taken to ensure that Canada meets its obligations under clause 3(1) of the Kyoto protocol.

The bill would also require the government to make, amend or repeal the necessary regulations in order to meet its obligations. In so doing, it may take into account the implementation of other governmental measures, including spending and federal-provincial agreements.

All of this can be done, if there is political will to do so, of course. However, this very political will is so desperately lacking within this government.

• (1905)

[*English*]

In the short time left, I would like to stress that more than anything else, this bill is about the future. It calls on the government to act responsibly and to act now. It calls for concrete action to improve the lives of future generations.

[*Translation*]

The environment is certainly an area in which we can act immediately, in order to improve the living conditions for future generations.

Not only can we act, but we must act. We cannot follow the Conservative lead and say that it is impossible, that it is too complicated, too difficult.

[*English*]

In fact, the government decided to give up before it had even started trying and this is simply unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

Climate change is one of the most important challenges facing humanity, not only from an environmental perspective, but also in terms of public health, food security, quality of life and economic prosperity.

As I have already clearly stated, when a government does not respect international law or the will of its own citizens, when it fails to assume its responsibilities regarding one of the most important

challenges facing our planet, Parliament has the ability and the obligation to force the government to do so.

I therefore encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favour of this important bill. We must do it for our future, but above all, for the future of our children.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 7:07 p.m., the time for debate has expired.

Accordingly, 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. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 4, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the member for Red Deer talk about the importance of wind energy at a time when the government has cancelled or frozen the program.

The Canadian wind energy sector is emerging as one of the key components in our energy mix for the next 20 years. As traditional sources of fuels and energies peak and dwindle, wind energy will remain strong and viable as there is nearly a limitless supply. The Liberal Party and the Liberal government recognized this. That is why in budget 2005 we committed to an expanded wind energy incentive by quadrupling the previous program and committing \$200 million over five years.

Unfortunately, it would seem that this is not as clear to the Conservatives as it is to us. Perhaps some data will help them understand better.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1910)

[*Translation*]

The Canadian wind energy industry has shown impressive growth with an average annual increase of over 30% for the last five years. A recent report shows that wind energy firms are optimistic about future growth.

[*English*]

Globally, wind energy capacity increased from 18,000 megawatts to 59,000 megawatts between 2000 and 2005, and now produces enough power to meet the needs of more than 17 million homes. By 2010, global installed wind energy capacity is expected to be 149,000 megawatts.

As an example, wind energy met 20% of electricity demand in Denmark, 8% in Spain, 5% in Germany and 4% in Portugal and Ireland. Wind energy could easily meet 15% to 20% of Canada's total electricity needs based on an initial target of 10,000 megawatts by 2010, which would take us to about 4% of Canada's total electricity needs. Experience in other countries is clearly demonstrating that wind energy can make substantive and significant contributions to total electricity supplied.

Further, the wind energy industry can create jobs. Every one megawatt of installed wind energy capacity in Canada generates \$1.5 million in investment and creates 2.5 direct and 8 indirect person years of employment. If 5% of Canada's electricity was generated by wind energy in 2015, such development would produce \$19.5 billion in investment and create 32,500 direct and 104,000 indirect person years of employment.

[*Translation*]

In the last session, the Minister of Natural Resources claimed that the Conservative government did not scrap funding for the wind power production incentive program, but what he later admitted was that funding had been frozen, effectively paralyzing the program and creating uncertainty for this industry.

[*English*]

In a May 26 letter from Mr. Robert Hornung, the president of the Canadian Wind Energy Association, to the Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Hornung made it clear that the freezing of funds within the wind power production incentive program has had a serious negative effect on the industry. He said:

The fact that WPPI [wind power production incentive program] funds are frozen has made it difficult for the Federal Government to continue to work with projects currently in the process to obtain funds under the WPPI program. For example, projects must work with the Federal Government on a federal environmental assessment in order to have access to WPPI [the wind power production incentive program]. These processes have slowed down significantly or halted. As a result, valuable time is being lost for projects who are working to be in a position to access WPPI if the expansion proceeds. This means delay in ultimately getting these projects into the ground where they can provide significant economic benefits to local communities across Canada.

This is proof that the Conservative government cutbacks are hurting the industry and costing jobs for Canadians. As we have seen with the scrapping of the popular one tonne challenge and other programs, these are ideologically driven. I would ask the government to reinstate this very important program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond today to the question asked by my hon. colleague, the member for Etobicoke North. The hon. member is concerned about the alleged cuts to programs. We know that programs such as EnerGuide or the one tonne challenge were deemed ineffective. That is why the current government is now looking into more effective programs.

I would like to remind the hon. member that the Minister of Finance made a \$2 billion commitment to the environment and energy efficiency in the budget he brought down.

This is a significant investment. We think such an investment can be better used and provide better results than the money spent by the previous government.

Our government promised to pursue new directions in matters of climate change policy. We want a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a plan that takes into account the economic, social and environmental context of our country. We want to establish a plan that ensures clean air, water, soil and energy for Canadians—an effective and realistic way for Canada to address issues related to climate change.

It is not enough to do what the previous government did, which was to make an international commitment without developing a plan to honour that commitment and without determining what impact it might have on Canada. We have seen the results of that approach. Years after the Liberal government adopted programs and spent hundreds of millions of dollars on climate change initiatives, we are still far from achieving significant results and very far from meeting our commitments. The Liberals set a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 6%. Today, Canada's emissions are 35% above that target.

It is time to restructure our programs, and that is what we are doing. We have to find the best way of using this money for maximum impact on climate change.

Some of the current programs can be tailored to our strategy. In other cases, however, we will have to decide whether taxpayers' money might not be better used to support the new strategy. All the climate change initiatives are being reviewed, to make sure they produce real results for Canada.

My friend mentioned the EnerGuide program and the one tonne challenge. On re-evaluating these initiatives, the government concluded that taxpayers' money could be better used and spent on initiatives that will be more effective in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The government is developing a new strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As my friend is aware, the various ministers with responsibility in this area will be announcing specific initiatives in the coming weeks. The House will then see the wisdom of investing in programs that will have a real impact on air, water, soil and energy quality for Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1915)

[*English*]

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, while the government hides behind reviews, studies and platitudes, Canadian workers and the industry are suffering.

[*Translation*]

We have heard a lot about this Conservative government's "made in Canada" approach to our greenhouse gas and climate change problems, but to date the government has not given us anything concrete, only promises and hot air.

[*English*]

While the Prime Minister talks of Canada's energy resources to his friends in the Republican Party, his government is squandering and choking off a burgeoning energy industry by refusing to commit to the renewal and expansion of the wind power production incentive.

Does the parliamentary secretary have the courage to look up from his prepared text and commit to the House tonight that his backward and hypocritical government will do the right thing for a change and unfreeze and expand the wind power production incentive?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We arrived here in power as a new government and emissions are 35% over the previous government's target, and we are being asked to manage

responsibly. In the meantime, while we are waiting for a new made in Canada solution to be implemented, the government is managing some 95 different programs that address climate change. These programs will continue in the current fiscal year and temporary financial assistance will be available, as is already the case. As I was saying earlier, the ministers concerned will make relevant announcements on specific programs.

From the beginning we realized that some programs were not achieving the desired results. My colleague referred to the One Tonne Challenge, for example, a marketing campaign run by the previous government. We do not want to adopt that approach. We want to use taxpayers' money in a way that will achieve the best results. We want to implement more effective and efficient programs to reduce emissions in a responsible manner.

We will continue to review current activities and support those that work. Furthermore, we are planning to add new activities that will help improve performance for all Canadians. We are committed to establishing a strategy that will ensure the quality of air, water, soil and energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:18 p.m.)

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