



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 142 • NUMBER 070 • 2nd SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 2, 2008

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

TSAWWASSEN FIRST NATION

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bertha Williams' family has lived on the Tsawwassen reserve for generations. More than half of all Tsawwassen band members live off reserve yet are able to vote on the proposed treaty and the reserve's land use plan. This upsets her.

In a recent speech, Bertha stated:

A lot of our elders...are new to our community...They lost their status years ago. They went off, got married, they didn't want to be labelled as native....

These elders...don't know our history...don't know our culture.

Bertha states emphatically:

I have never surrendered my birthright...I have never left my homeland....

[But] we are outnumbered...The majority of those who are voting band members live off the reserve.

There are people that live in Alabama, Los Angeles...across the Prairies...They are band members but they have no intention of ever living on the reserve. Yet they are voting on our business.

A lot of them have never even visited the Reserve. It is just ludicrous how they have so much to say on our livelihood...I see it as the demise of my people.

Bertha's complete speech can be heard at johncummins.ca.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians have voiced their disapproval of CBC radio's plan to disband its Vancouver based orchestra, which has been performing live since 1938.

While this is troubling, especially for me as a Vancouverite, what should be the real cause for alarm is that this cut is symptomatic of a greater problem.

The CBC has been bleeding slowly from lack of funding for necessary infrastructure to convert to digital and for radio transmitters to expand its regional and rural reach. It has had to dip into operational funds. This means program cuts.

In its recent report on the review of the CBC, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage called for a substantial increase in funding, including urgent one-time infrastructure money. The Conservative government has yet to respond.

If the government continues to drag its feet, Canadians will be forced to watch CBC whittle away at its essential programming. Canada ranks 16th out of 18 western nations in funding its public broadcaster.

What a public shame.

* * *

[Translation]

CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC TOURISM AWARDS

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, three Drummondville-area tourist attractions received awards at the recent evening presentation of the Grands Prix du tourisme de la région Centre-du-Québec. The three recipients were the Village Québécois d'Antan, AO La Fantastique Légende, and an outdoor adventure park called Réseaux Plein Air Drummond.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2007, the historical Québécois village, which won in the "Tourist attractions—100,000 visitors and more" category, beat all attendance records. And the neighbouring attraction, the multimedia show, AO La Fantastique Légende, performed a brand new show made possible by an investment of nearly \$3 million. This show earned them the award for "Tourist attraction—Under 100,000 visitors".

Réseaux Plein Air Drummond opened an aerial circuit called D'Arbre en Arbre in the Saint-Joachim-de-Courval sector of the park, which clinched the "Outdoor and Leisure Activities" prize for them.

Statements by Members

Congratulations to all the directors and volunteers of these organizations.

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[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian women are tired of being treated like afterthoughts by the Conservative government.

Half the population paying over \$42 billion in taxes should have warranted more than a few words in the Conservative budget, and its promise to draft an action plan sometime next year to improve women's economic and social conditions is another slap in the face.

I guess the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages does not know that such a document already exists, and has since 1995, and can be found on the Status of Women website.

This promise to draft a plan and the Conservative budget do virtually nothing for Canadian women struggling to balance work and family life, and its "tax cuts are the answer" to a potential economic downturn means that women must wait even longer for the government to even consider their real and urgent needs.

Women benefit most from investments in vital services such as affordable child care, housing and tuition, but none of these appeared in the budget, despite the availability of huge surpluses.

Instead, the budget hammers home the government's key priorities: tax cuts and debt reduction. However, the bigger question is this: what happened to the surplus?

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MEMBER FOR DESNETHÉ—MISSISSIPPI—CHURCHILL RIVER

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tansi, delangete, bonjour and hello. On December 21, 2007, the byelection for the riding of Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River was announced. On March 17, the constituents spoke out loud and clear and now I stand before the House as a member of Parliament for the Conservative Party of Canada.

I am deeply honoured and humbled to be standing here today. I would like to thank my wife Leanne, my son Kobey and my daughter Kabree for providing me with the support and the opportunity to be the candidate for the Conservative Party.

I would like to thank all my supporters and volunteers. If I miss anyone, I apologize. I would like to thank: Fraser McFarlane; Brad Hvidston; the Cameron family from Meadow Lake; Leroy Laliberte; Bruce and Collette Janes; Thomas Syrzecki; Winston McKay; and Jimmy Durocher.

On July 7, 2006, while I was stationed with the RCMP in Spiritwood, Saskatchewan, two members were fatally shot. I would like to dedicate this byelection to the memory of Constable Marc Bourdages and Constable Robin Cameron.

Merci, thank you, and hi-hi.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF ITALIAN CANADIANS

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 28, 2008, the National Congress of Italian Canadians, Quebec region, held its first-ever "Ordine al Merito" gala evening, and as the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, I had the honour to attend.

This evening was in recognition of the extraordinary and exemplary contributions made by individuals to the development and well-being of our community over the years, economically, socially and culturally.

I would like to congratulate Antonio Sciascia, the president, and the members of the board of directors for this wonderful initiative.

I would also like to congratulate the recipients of the order of merit. Maria Marelli won in the social category, Gerlando Argento won in the economic development category, Ermanno LaRiccia won in the cultural category, and Joe Reda won in the economic category.

These remarkable people and their achievements in our society are indicative of the wonderful contributions made by members of the Italian community here in Canada.

* * *

[English]

UN WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago yesterday, my wife and I received word from doctors that our two and a half year old son, Jaden, had autism.

Today we mark the first ever UN World Autism Awareness Day. It is a day not only to discuss the many challenges that accompany this mysterious disorder, but to share and celebrate the truly unique and authentic individuals who have autism.

Jaden may not be a star hockey player or a straight A student, but he and other individuals with autism are remarkable in ways that we tend to undervalue in our goal oriented society.

Jaden does not know how to hate. He can be aggressive, but is never intentionally mean, and he does not know when other kids are being mean to him. He never gossips or holds a grudge.

He is 100% genuine and honest with his feelings, something that is particularly difficult when he is sad, because usually he is unable to communicate the reason for his tears.

Almost every single person in Jaden's life would say that they get more from him than he takes from them. We should all hope to one day achieve that kind of impact through our own lives.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

MONIQUE LEROUX

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 15, Monique Leroux became the first woman in 108 years to be elected as the president and chief executive officer of the Desjardins Group. She is also the world's first female president of a major financial institution.

Ms. Leroux, who is 53, has served as Desjardins' chief financial officer since 2004. She was named one of Canada's top 100 most powerful women, and one of the top 25 women to watch in 2008. Last year, she received a leadership award from the Association des femmes en finance du Québec.

This appointment is the crowning achievement of Ms. Leroux's impressive career. She was an auditor with Ernst & Young, president of the Ordre des comptables agréés du Québec, the Royal Bank's vice-president for the Quebec region, and vice-president and chief of operations with Quebecor.

Congratulations, Ms. Leroux. You are a model of success and accomplishment for all Quebecers, both men and women. My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I wish you every success in your new job.

* * *

[English]

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Liberal intergovernmental affairs critic, Gerard Kennedy, promised during the Liberal leadership race that he would run for election in western Canada.

Kennedy said the Liberals have to do a better job of representing the west even if he has to run in the region himself. He also said the only thing that would prevent him from running out west would be the Conservative government forcing an election before the leadership convention.

However, that did not happen, and this anointed Liberal candidate is now running in Parkdale—High Park in Toronto. I know Parkdale—High Park is on the western side of downtown Toronto, but it seems that our friend is a little lost. Maybe Mr. Kennedy needs a lesson in geography, but as we witnessed in the recent byelections, I think it will take a lot more than that to find fortune for the Liberal Party in western Canada.

* * *

JAPAN

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Japan. This is a historic relationship that has been nurtured over the years since 1928.

Although our countries are separated by the Pacific Ocean, we have built strong and lasting bridges in the areas of commerce, trade, cultural exchanges and peacekeeping missions: “Miles apart—Minds together”.

Japan has the second largest economy in the world and Canada has played an important and integral part in advancing business

opportunities in Japan as well as encouraging Japanese investments in Canada.

Canadians of Japanese ancestry who arrived here over 100 years ago have contributed immensely in the areas of environment, commerce and architecture, to name a few.

Today, the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group will hold a reception with His Excellency, Ambassador Nishida of Japan, that will highlight the relationship between our two countries. This will be the first of a series of events bringing Canadians together to celebrate this unique and important relationship. *Arigato gozaimasu.*

* * *

● (1415)

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in yet another confusing development from Queen's Park, today Ontario municipal affairs minister Jim Watson is criticizing the federal government on our commitment to affordable housing. That is remarkable, considering the province has \$165 million in unspent federal housing dollars from 2006.

Premier McGuinty often complains about our criticism of his government, but when two years have passed and he cannot seem to find a way to distribute federal housing dollars, people will understand our frustration when he sends out ministers like Jim Watson who are less than fulsome in their remarks.

Mr. McGuinty can try to play politics on important matters like affordable housing, but it would be nice if he recognized his responsibility and actually got the job done.

Perhaps while he is at it, Dalton McGuinty might also want to send a signal that the province of Ontario actually wants to compete with other jurisdictions by reducing the provincial corporate income tax rate and even getting around to harmonizing its investment in the job killing PST with the GST. It is just a suggestion, in the interest of all Ontarians.

* * *

FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the sad record of the Conservative government on aboriginal education got worse.

First Nations Technical Institute was saved from closing, not by these Conservatives but by the Ontario government, which guaranteed additional funding of \$1.5 million to make sure classes run next year.

For three budgets, two economic statements and uncountable lectures from the Conservative side of the House, Canadians have been told that education is a priority for the government, but its record proves otherwise.

There has been no support for a crown jewel of aboriginal education, FNTI, which was created through a partnership between Tyendinaga and the province of Ontario and the federal government. Now the Conservatives are telling FNTI it should replace federal funding with fundraising.

Oral Questions

Congratulations to FNTI for this last minute step back from the brink, but shame on the Conservative government for refusing to come to the table and work with aboriginal people to ensure education really is a priority.

* * *

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the publication of the well-known story *Anne of Green Gables*. To mark this anniversary, there will be many events in Prince Edward Island to commemorate and celebrate this event.

The celebration of this anniversary offers my province and readers from around the world the chance not only to celebrate the character of Anne Shirley, but also to celebrate all things Montgomery's book has made famous, the creativity, optimism, determination and the beauty of Prince Edward Island.

The publication of *Anne of Green Gables* a century ago has inspired great musicals, plays, television shows, movies and other books that are thriving today. The imagination found in this book transcends the world, as it has been translated into 30 languages.

I extend an invitation to all to come to Prince Edward Island this year to celebrate the anniversary of this wonderful book, *Anne of Green Gables*.

* * *

[Translation]

**MINISTER OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY OF CANADA FOR THE REGIONS OF QUEBEC**

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a burst of enthusiasm, the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and member for Jonquière—Alma accused the Bloc Québécois of not being vigilant.

Speaking of vigilance, he is incapable of negotiating his own budgets in cabinet and has no power within his party. As a result, \$107 million for Quebec and the regions has been lost. “Powerless” is the first adjective that comes to mind, but “useless” is even more fitting.

By levelling these accusations against the Bloc, the minister is trying to divert attention away from the fact that it is the Bloc that brought to light the \$107 million in cuts to his budget.

The minister can go ahead and criticize the Bloc's role in Ottawa all he likes, but the fact is that most Quebecers chose the Bloc to represent them in Ottawa, because the Bloc Québécois best defends the interests of Quebecers.

* * *

[English]

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise today to acknowledge and celebrate the new UN resolution marking today, April 2, the first annual World Autism Awareness Day.

It has been more than a year and a half since I introduced my private member's motion calling for evidence based standards, innovative funding arrangements for diagnosis, treatment and research and a national surveillance program.

● (1420)

[Translation]

The motion was adopted in good faith and supported by the government. It is therefore regrettable that the Conservative government has made no mention of a national autism strategy in its past two budgets.

[English]

This is about improving the lives of hundreds of Canadian children and families. I call on the government to work with the provinces to take concrete action and make the necessary investments to finally implement a national autism strategy.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a few months shy of their 18th anniversary, the Bloc members are hoping to dispel the unprecedented existential crisis they are experiencing as the perpetual opposition party. We often hear the Bloc leader say that democracy should not be reduced to just exercising power because if that were the case parliaments would be closed.

Despite the Bloc's attempt to make democracy a simple matter of asking questions in the House, the fact remains that, before making such statements, it would be best that it consult its own members.

Last Monday, a Bloc member declared, “Being in opposition wears you down. I know some individuals who would like to use their abilities to govern.” I agree with this unidentified colleague.

The Bloc should immediately stop misleading Canadians and acknowledge that it is useful for an MP to be a member of government. In 18 years in Ottawa, the Bloc has spent more than 6,000 days in perpetual opposition, asked more than 4,000 questions in the House, made more than 700 empty promises and yielded no concrete results because it cannot come to power.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

IMMIGRATION

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I used a 1988 quote from the Prime Minister on immigration, but he had more to say in 2001 when he said:

—west of Winnipeg the ridings the Liberals hold are dominated by people who are either recent Asian immigrants or recent migrants from Eastern Canada; people who live in ghettos and are not integrated into Western Canadian society.

Is it not true that the Prime Minister's view about immigration has not changed in 20 years?

Oral Questions

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the views are nonsense as is evidenced by the fact that under this government we have the highest levels ever of immigration in Canadian history, which helps fuel our economy.

On another note, I noticed today that the secretive and controlling Liberal leader is now trying to turn to the courts to censor the media. It is based on the argument that being publicly identified as a Liberal in the province of Quebec can cause irreparable harm to someone's reputation. I understand that argument.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since I did not get an answer to my question, I will try again in French.

Here is what the Prime Minister had to say about immigrants and immigration in 2001: "West of Winnipeg, the ridings the Liberals hold are dominated by people who are either recent Asian immigrants or recent migrants from Eastern Canada; people who live in ghettos and are not integrated into western Canadian society." Ghettos!

It is not true the Prime Minister's opinion on immigration and immigrants has not changed in 20 years?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense. It was the Liberal Party that introduced the Chinese head tax. It was the Liberal Party that then expanded it to apply to all immigrants in the form of a high landing fee. It was the Liberal Party that opposed the reduction in the landing fee that we brought into place. When we presented an apology for the Chinese head tax, the Liberal leader was nowhere to be seen.

Do members know where he is this week?

[Translation]

I understand he is fighting in court. What I understand is that the leader of the Liberal Party wants to turn to the courts to censor the media. This action is based on the notion of being publicly recognized as a Liberal—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[English]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have every right to be concerned about the government's hidden agenda on immigration, on censorship, on minority rights, on the Constitution.

That is why I am asking again: Why is the government attempting to make radical changes to the immigration system through the back door instead of bringing forward independent legislation and being honest with Canadians?

• (1425)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very honest with Canadians. We tell them where we

stand and then we vote that way when we stand in our place in the House.

The Leader of the Opposition and his party are going to have a chance to do that on the very bill about which they are talking. The debate starts in the House tomorrow. They can debate it as long as they want. They can do what they like on the bill. They can even stand in their place and vote against it if they do not like it. We are waiting to see them do that, but I suspect they are going to implement his strategy of seeking only power and not bothering to stand up regardless of the issue.

The Liberals are only interested in calling an election when the poll numbers are right for them.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot fix the immigration backlog by giving the minister powers to pick her favourite immigrants. We cannot fix the backlog by throwing a meagre \$22 million at the problem. We cannot fix the backlog by cherry-picking the queue. We should not fix the backlog by capping immigration levels. This is not a solution to the problem.

Will the minister admit that this so-called reform is a power grab so she gets to pick and choose who gets into the country? Will she then explain why we are supposed to trust her?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberals who created this mess in the first place. Even the hon. member admitted that when he said that the Liberals did not get it done on immigration.

What we are trying to do is to make it possible for more immigrants to come to this country and for them to get here sooner. That is important. We need it for industry. We need families to be reunited. Employers need these people now.

We are being fair. It is transparent and there will be charter compliance because we need these people even if the Liberals do not want them to come here.

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, Quebec announced \$68 million in new funding for immigration. Ontario recently announced additional funding and so did British Columbia. This government, however, has announced the paltry sum of \$22 million to deal with the waiting list backlog.

Will the minister finally admit that she is trying to increase her own powers, rather than solving the real problems concerning the backlog?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to see the Liberals defend a system that they themselves destroyed. We are the ones who invested \$1.4 billion to help immigrants succeed upon their arrival. They are the ones who voted against that funding and those investments intended to help newcomers succeed.

*Oral Questions***QUEBEC NATION**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour told the *Globe and Mail* that the government would have to give more meaning to its recognition of Quebec as a nation, or, as he phrased it, “put some meat around it”. In so saying, the Minister of Labour admitted that his party’s recognition of our nation is purely symbolic.

Can he explain how he plans to move from words to action in recognizing the Quebec nation?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since we came to power, our party, the Conservative Party, has been more open than any other party to ways to help Canada. I repeat: our party is the one that demonstrated open federalism with respect to Quebec. Our party is more receptive to Quebec’s demands than any other party.

What have we done since coming to power? We recognized the Quebec nation within a united Canada. We gave Quebec a seat at UNESCO and we did even more in two other areas. Why? Because we are open to—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he himself said that the government had to give more meaning to recognizing the Quebec nation. He even talked about putting it into the Constitution. However, today, he is telling us that the fruit is not yet ripe. The Conservative Party has been here for 141 years, and now they are telling us that the fruit is not yet ripe. The problem is not with the fruit; the problem is that the tree itself is rotten.

We have some pretty simple suggestions that do not require constitutional change. For example, the government could recognize that French is Quebec’s official language and should be the language of work in banking and telecommunications, even though those sectors fall under the federal code.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our predecessor, the Liberal Party, was always unbending and not open to Quebec. Our vision is completely different. All Quebecers dream of the day when these elements—the nation, UNESCO, issues about resolving the fiscal imbalance and restricting federal spending power—will be part of the Constitution. For that to happen, all of the provinces must agree; there must be consensus. For the time being, the fruit is not ripe.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though the Conservatives have been in this House for 141 years, the fruit is not yet ripe? The government can act right now. Recognizing Quebec as a nation has to be more than just a symbolic gesture. The Bloc Québécois has proposed a number of ways of giving tangible expression to the recognition of the Quebec nation, and it is open to other proposals and willing to consider other gestures.

The government can and must act now. It must move from talk to action. Does the government realize that it has no reason to wait and that it can recognize the Quebec nation in a tangible way now?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day in this House, the government is taking action to promote open federalism.

Hon. members will recall that the last time the Bloc Québécois had the opportunity to support a budget brought down by my colleague, the Minister of Finance—which was not so long ago—the Bloc decided to vote against that budget. And what did that budget do? It eliminated the millennium scholarships. How can people have confidence in the Bloc?

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec’s finance minister, Ms. Jérôme-Forget, has criticized the federal budget. How can people have confidence in the Conservative members from Quebec?

Again yesterday, the Conservative government missed a perfect opportunity to show that it was working for Quebec by voting for the Bloc Québécois motion, which would have marked a step toward recognizing the Quebec nation by allowing the Charter of the French Language to apply to employees of federally regulated businesses.

Yesterday, by voting against our motion, the Conservatives showed that recognizing the Quebec nation was nothing but an election ploy, just like the proposal by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is continuing to raise his voice, but that does not make him any more convincing.

In the end, people know that it is this government that is accomplishing things for Quebec. We corrected the fiscal imbalance, we increased transfers to Quebec and we gave Quebec a seat at UNESCO. We are taking action, while the eternal leader of the Bloc Québécois continues to gad about.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: Yes, he is the eternal leader of the Bloc, even though for 24 hours he did leave us for Quebec City.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we understand why the Prime Minister’s Office interfered in the U.S. primaries. By damaging Obama’s campaign and undermining his position on NAFTA, the government had hoped it could avoid reopening NAFTA.

We learn that instead of trying to seize the opportunity to improve environmental standards and working conditions, the Minister of International Trade is trying to prevent such improvements. Nonetheless, he said the opposite to the representative from Maine.

What is the government’s position? Does it want to reopen NAFTA or not?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the leader of the NDP thinks that free trade has not been good for Canada. He apparently has not noticed the hundreds of thousands of new jobs that have been created as a result of that and the fact that our economy has prospered over the years. We understand that the NDP wants to go back to the old ways of fortresses against the rest of the world.

We believe Canadians can succeed. We have the best things to offer and our history and track record show that is, indeed, the case.

We intend to continue with NAFTA. We think it is providing great benefits for Canada, for the Americans, for the Mexicans. We have all become more prosperous and more secure and everyone's standard of living has risen as a result.

• (1435)

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we want to hear a clear statement from the government on whether or not NAFTA will be renegotiated and whether it is willing to do the right thing for the environment and for the hard-working families in this country. We are dealing with a minister who is the same old, floor-crossing minister who signed the softwood sellout where hundreds of working families are losing their jobs, as we speak, across this country.

The fact is that there is a golden opportunity here to work with our friends across the border to fix a trade deal that is not working for working families. Will the government do it, yes or no?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that NAFTA has been working very well for working families in Canada. We have no intention of scrapping that. We know there is a party in the House of Commons that said that it would scrap it if it ever got into power and that when it got into power, which is the only thing it is ever interested in doing, it did not bother to scrap it at all and kept it. The reason they kept it is that it is good for Canada.

Since we became the government, guess what, things have been getting even better on the economy. Since we became government, nearly 800,000 new jobs for Canadians, good, high paying, permanent and full time jobs almost all of them. The strong economy has allowed us to reduce the GST to 5% to help every individual in Canada, working families, everybody alike.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is trying to cut corners by introducing sweeping immigration changes through a budget implementation bill. She plans to fix an over 900,000 case backlog with a meagre 1% departmental increase in funding.

Why has the minister failed to convince her cabinet colleagues, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, that immigration is important to this country?

Will the minister admit in the House, as she did in committee, that she does not have enough resources to get her job done?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are making real steps, real steps the Liberals certainly did not make, to cut the backlog, to get more people here faster, to get families here faster and to get skilled workers here sooner.

We are putting new resources toward this, \$22 million over the first two years and up to \$37 million the year after that. However, it is not enough just to throw money at it and put ourselves back into deficit, as the Liberals would have us do. We need to do it better and smarter, which is why I am so pleased that the Liberal Party is supporting the budget where these changes are coming forward.

[Translation]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of fighting to get the necessary funding to reduce the backlog, the minister wants unilateral authority to pick and choose who can come to Canada. New arrivals will have to wait one year to find out whether their application will be accepted or not.

When will the minister admit that her plan undermines the integrity of the system and tarnishes Canada's reputation?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was the Liberal government that tarnished the reputation of Canada when it comes to immigration. It promised a lot but delivered very little.

The Liberals are the ones who capped the number of people who could come here by overburdening a system to the point now where it is crumbling around itself and where we are losing valuable, much needed talent to other countries where the processing time is three to six months. Here it is three to six years.

If we do not do something significant right away, which is what we are proposing, it will take immigrants 10 years to get here. That is not fair to them, not fair to their families here and not fair to Canada.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has tried to hide sweeping immigration reforms in the budget bill and has denied Parliament and all Canadians the opportunity to have an open and honest debate.

Is the government afraid that such a debate will force it to abandon these discriminatory and unfair reforms to Canada's Immigration Act?

• (1440)

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we put these measures into the budget bill. I am pleased to say that it will be announced tomorrow. It will be debated tomorrow and every member in this House will have the opportunity to address it at length. It also will be discussed at committee, giving full air to everyone's views.

Oral Questions

If the Liberals are suggesting that this is discriminatory, I assure all members that all of these things will be in compliance with the charter. For them to suggest that we would break the charter, break the law, is simply more fearmongering. It is irresponsible because they are only after power, not after helping people.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear. The legislation would give the minister unilateral powers to refuse to process applications and to discriminate against newcomers based on background, region or skill sets.

Will the minister admit that these reforms remove equality from Canada's immigration system and give her the ability to close the door on those she does not want?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member really should listen a little better. We want more immigrants to come here and we want to get them here sooner. We want them here sooner than the six years it now takes, thanks to the previous government's actions.

All of our instructions will be charter compliant and the charter does not allow discrimination by race, religion or ethnicity. The hon. member should know that by now. We want more people to get here sooner. We will get the job done.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMUNICATIONS SECURITY ESTABLISHMENT

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there have already been three reports asking the federal government to clarify the law governing the Communications Security Establishment, the CSE, to better protect the privacy of Canadians who communicate with parties outside the country. Since May 2007, the CSE Commissioner himself has urged the government to act as quickly as possible.

How can the Minister of National Defence justify his inaction? Is it not because, in the end, he is perfectly comfortable with the potential invasion of Canadians' privacy?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, questions about Canadians' security are very important. That is why the agencies, including the agency mentioned by my colleague, are included in the process that allows us to access information, to protect our citizens and also protect our citizens' privacy. Those two things are very important.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if it is important, he would already have acted. But it has been over a year and still nothing has been done.

It is currently the Minister of National Defence himself who can approve the interception of these kinds of private communications, as opposed to an impartial, competent judge. Given the importance of the rights we are talking about, will the minister agree that CSE should obtain the authorization of a judge to be able to intercept private communications of Canadians, even if they are with parties outside the country?

[English]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the security of Canadians is

paramount to this government, and CSEC is another tool the government employs to ensure that. CSEC directs its intelligence activities at foreign targets located outside Canada and is prohibited by the National Defence Act from targeting communications of Canadians. Section 273 of the act requires the authorization of the Minister of National Defence to intercept communications of foreign targets outside Canada, even if those communications originate or terminate in Canada.

I would also like to point out that the CSE commissioner, former Supreme Court Justice Gonthier, has confirmed the lawfulness of the CSEC activities review.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance on February 26 opened the door to compensation for tax harmonization in Ontario. It states, "The Government is willing to work with the five provinces that still have [retail sales taxes] to help facilitate the transition to provincial value-added taxes harmonized with the GST."

Is the Minister of Finance preparing to help Ontario, as he has already helped the Maritimes?

● (1445)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

[English]

In the budget we have indicated to the provinces that do not have harmonized sales taxes with the GST that we would be prepared to work with them to accomplish that. Some discussions have taken place with some of those provinces, in the same way I might add, that in the budget last year we provided an incentive for those provinces that still had capital taxes to eliminate those capital taxes. Several provinces have taken steps in that regard. I am pleased to see that the province of Ontario took that step in its budget last week.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec harmonized taxes in 1992-94, and did not receive a cent from the federal government to do so. Quebec estimates that it would have been entitled to \$2 billion if Ottawa had made a similar offer for harmonization.

Will Quebec finally receive this \$2 billion in compensation?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we work with the provinces continually with respect to tax matters and the integration of tax initiatives, tax policies, including the registered disability savings plan which we created, with thanks to the Bloc for its support on that, including the working income tax benefit to help people enter the workforce. There is regular facilitation of tax policy with the provinces.

The province of Quebec has also taken up the incentive with respect to capital taxes, moving toward their elimination in Quebec.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and the former vice-president of the advertising firm, LXB.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Bourassa now has the floor.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that they will applaud again.

My question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages and the former vice-president of the advertising firm, LXB.

In speaking of censorship, La Rochefoucauld said, "Mediocre minds usually dismiss anything which reaches beyond their own understanding." Does she really wish to be associated with the "great darkness" and have our culture, creative arts and film industry be controlled by her religious lobbyist friends?

Why is she so stubbornly opposed to amending Bill C-10 and thereby preventing us from stepping back in time 50 years? Duplessis, be gone!

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the new critic for heritage and official languages. Fortunately, they exercised enough good judgment not to make him critic for the status of women as well. However, the member should know that the government's intentions are the same as those announced in 2002 and 2003 by his former colleagues.

[English]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard worse things from better people.

[Translation]

It will have an impact not only on artistic creation but also on the Canadian economy. In Quebec alone, the film industry generates 29,600 jobs and revenues of \$1.14 billion. Tax credits represent 25% of funding for Canadian productions. Her power trip with her religious friends will ensure that banks will no longer want to finance the film industry.

What assurances does the minister of the Index of banned books need, besides the provisions of the Criminal Code, or has La Rochefoucauld found another censorship enthusiast?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no more and no less than what his former colleagues in the previous government intended in 2002 and 2003. And in a few minutes, I will be discussing this matter before the Senate committee.

* * *

● (1450)

[English]

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-50 rips the heart out of Canada's immigration system by cabinet orders exercised in secret. Bill C-10 is the ideological censorship of film and video productions by cabinet orders imposed in secret. Now there is Bill C-46, a sneak attack on the democratic rights of farmers to control the Wheat Board, again by cabinet orders imposed in secret.

Why does the government, which ran on accountability, have so much dirty work being done in secret?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is apparently the Liberal leader who is into being controlling and secretive these days.

[Translation]

In my understanding, it is the leader of the Liberal Party who is trying to use the courts to censor the media. This approach is based on the idea that being publicly known as a Liberal in Quebec can harm one's reputation and cause irreparable damage. That may be true.

[English]

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that irrelevant answer.

Bill C-46 kills democratic producer control over the Wheat Board. By the stroke of a pen in the middle of the night, the minister will have the power to destroy the board by issuing a secret cabinet order. There will be no reference to Parliament, or the courts, or the Wheat Board's producer directors. There will be no democratic right for farmers to vote.

Why has the minister launched a sneak attack on prairie farmers just to please his Republican friends in Washington?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had some great meetings with industry and the new U.S. secretary of agriculture in Washington the other day. Surprisingly, the Wheat Board did not come up at all.

Oral Questions

In the meetings that I have with farmers across the country, of course the Wheat Board does come up in western Canada. They are willing to move ahead. They are wanting to move ahead. They are sick and tired of that party hiding the free market from them.

We will deliver for farmers. We always put farmers first.

* * *

PRODUCT SAFETY

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives are about good government for Canadians, where Liberals are only interested in what being a government can do for them.

It should come as no surprise that when the Liberals had the chance, they failed on all accounts to bolster and strengthen our product safety system in Canada. Thankfully, our government is taking action where the Liberals could not and would not.

Would the Minister of Health please update the House on how our government intends to strengthen Canadian confidence in the products that they use every day?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his analysis of the situation. I think he is absolutely correct. After being only interested in power and about their own self-justification, the Liberal Party members did nothing in the area of product safety and consumer safety for 13 long years.

Of course when we realized the situation, we directed our officials to do a thorough review. In the throne speech the Prime Minister moved forward with an ambitious plan to overhaul the product system in Canada. We are moving forward. The Prime Minister announced last December a new food and consumer safety action plan. We are delivering where the Liberals dithered.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, average Canadians are being ripped off by the telecom giants which are arbitrarily throttling information on the Internet. This is about a practice of a few large players being able to squeeze out smaller competition.

What steps will the Minister of Industry take to ensure that consumers who paid for access are not going to be ripped off, that badly needed competition will not be squeezed off, and send a message to the telecom giants that they have no business monkey wrenching with the free flow of information?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the edification of my friend, the Internet is not regulated in Canada. We continue to monitor the discussion that is taking place, but there is no regulation of the relationship between Internet providers and consumers.

We will continue to see how the issue unfolds.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's hands-off approach to hands-on interference is bad news for the development of a Canadian innovation agenda. Net neutrality is the cornerstone of an innovative economy, because it is

the consumer and the innovator who need to be in the driver's seat, not Ma Bell, not Rogers, not Vidéotron. They have no business deciding what information is in the fast lane or what information is in the slow lane.

Will the minister come out of the Gestetner age and take action on the issue of net throttling?

● (1455)

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think virtually all members of the House could agree that if anyone inhabits the Gestetner age, it is the New Democratic Party. Members of that party would carry our country into the economic backwater that they propose.

We have a well advanced Internet system in this country. It is not publicly regulated. At this point in time we will continue to leave the matter between consumers on the one hand and Internet service providers on the other.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has bungled the Brenda Martin case from day one. Now we have to take her word that she is in fact back on the file.

How can she, however, find out who leaked personal information on Ms. Martin when she could not even escape the media chasing her through a store?

This is the same minister who refused to visit Brenda Martin because she was too busy at a cocktail party only minutes from the prison.

Rather than thinking she is back to cause more damage in this case, will the minister save herself the humiliation of being fired and resign from cabinet immediately?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, has done a fantastic job on this and other files defending the rights of Canadians in prison abroad. We are proud of her hard work.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs went to Mexico and met with senior officials from multiple ministries, local, state and federal, whereas that member opposite shows up for photo ops to try to exploit the misery of Canadians in prisons abroad.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is because of that member that Huseyin Celil cannot be found and is rotting away in a prison in China. We do not need a lesson from that member and his party on looking after Canadians. We have done that job. He has not.

[Translation]

The minister destroyed her own credibility in this matter. This may have even led to the disclosure of information to tarnish Ms. Martin's reputation in order to divert attention from the minister's incompetence.

If the privacy commission's investigation finds that she or her assistants were at the root of this indiscretion, will she step down?

[English]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, William Sampson and Zahra Kazemi, that is the Liberal record on consular affairs.

From the day that Huseyin Celil was detained in Uzbekistan in March 2006 we were completely preoccupied with the case. The actions of this government on that matter have been endorsed by the World Uyghur Congress, the Uyghur Canadian Association, the lawyers for Mr. Celil, Amnesty International, and Mr. Celil's family.

If the Liberals were in power, we know what they would be doing about a Canadian in prison behind bars in China.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, justice issues used to be a priority for the government before it decided that it desperately needed to prevent Conservative officials from testifying before a committee with respect to offers made to Chuck Cadman.

They will not even hold a 30-second vote at the justice committee to hold supplemental hearings on the Criminal Code and attempts to bribe members of Parliament. They make the chair run away and shut down entirely the justice committee.

What is the government so afraid of? Why is it so afraid to have Conservative officials tell the truth before a committee?

Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, tough words from my colleague from Beauséjour, but the reality is that actions speak louder than words and I am thankful to the member for Beauséjour for his continued support of this government.

When the budget bill came before this House of Commons, there was in fact a non-confidence effort by the Liberals on our budget. I voted against the non-confidence motion because I wanted this Conservative government to go forward and continue serving Canadians. My colleague took the same position, except he did not vote for it because he could not be bothered to show up.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps he can answer—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, perhaps he can answer in French. Important issues such as identity theft and young offenders are being put on the back burner because this government is not allowing the chair of the committee to hold a 30-second vote. Witnesses who came from British Columbia were snubbed by the

chair of the committee, who shamefully shirked his responsibilities and left the room for the third time.

Will the government stop these shenanigans in the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights? Will the Prime Minister come and tell the truth if we invite him?

• (1500)

[English]

Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Northeast is one of the finest people who has ever set foot in this Parliament. He is the former chief of the Calgary police force. He has been an outstanding member of Parliament. He needs no lessons from the member for Beauséjour.

When it comes to committee hearings, voting at committees, and committees doing our business, since when did the Liberals actually care about turning up and voting in this Parliament?

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[Translation]

375TH ANNIVERSARY OF TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 10, the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages told me that funding for the 375th anniversary of Trois-Rivières, a 2009 Cultural Capital of Canada, would cover the costs of the festivities. But now we have learned that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women refused a request for funding from the International de l'art vocal de Trois-Rivières under the arts presentation Canada program.

Can the minister tell us why Trois-Rivières, chosen as a cultural city of the year, is not entitled to funding, even for recurring activities, such as the International de l'art vocal?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that grants and contributions from the Department of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women are awarded according to strict, established criteria. It is not a matter of one program penalizing another program. Generally, programs are there to help different organizations and activities.

However, I will examine the issue for the member in order to give her some answers.

* * *

SAINT-HUBERT AIRPORT

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear that we have programs to support projects in the regions, because the development of the Saint-Hubert airport is an important project for the South Shore, one that will create many jobs.

Oral Questions

The Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec must adapt his programs and budgets based on the projects submitted to him—in this case, the development of the Saint-Hubert airport—and not the other way around, that is, expect the projects to fit into his budgets.

Does the minister intend to publicly announce his plans as soon as possible and stop his scheming meant to minimize the scope of the project, which was initially quite extensive?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is to help diversify economic activity in the regions. We have an annual budget of some \$200 million. When someone asks us to fund an \$86 million project, we do consider that a large amount of money and, understandably, the agency is not in a position to allocate such an amount.

However, under reasonable circumstances, when the request is feasible and can be granted, we are always there to help these people. I hope they will continue their discussions with our officials on the matter.

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[English]

MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the environment minister claimed that he met with his cabinet colleagues in Ottawa in October of 2006 concerning the contribution agreement for Ottawa's LRT project. But, according to public records, the ministers that he claimed to have met were out of town.

Either these government records are false or the minister is not telling the truth. Which is it?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is nothing more than an attempt by Liberal Party members to change the channel on their weak leadership and the fact that they are not standing up and voting for their constituents. The reality is that the Liberal Party is only interested in returning to power.

This party is interested in principle. This party is interested in creating jobs, opening opportunity for Canadians, and we are getting the job done.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, David Ahenakew was stripped of his Order of Canada for repeatedly making racist anti-immigrant statements and in particular, for stating that Jews are a disease, they currently control the media, and the Holocaust was justified because it was Hitler's way of preventing the Jewish control of Europe.

Notwithstanding these facts, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations recently decided to reinstate Mr. Ahenakew as a senator within its organization, a position which is considered to be one of honour and leadership.

This is a disturbing decision. I would like to know what actions is the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development planning to take in this matter?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely disappointed and disturbed by the decision of the federation to reinstate David Ahenakew as a senator.

The past comments by this person have been very hurtful, inappropriate, and go against everything that this country stands for. There is a trial scheduled for this fall and it must run its course.

Our government has valued the positive working relationship that we have had with the federation. However, based on its latest decision, we will be reviewing that relationship including the funding that goes with it.

In the meantime, I have given clear instructions to my staff and to my department that they are not to participate in any meetings with the federation if Mr. Ahenakew is involved.

Again, I urge the FSIN to reconsider its regrettable decision.

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● (1505)

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the impending sale of the jewel of Canada's space industry is not in the interest of Canadian sovereignty.

RADARSAT-2 is now a target to be bought by an American weapons maker due to a weak law and underfunding of the space agency by the previous Liberal government and continued by the current government.

The government promised openness and transparency, but on this file it has been anything but.

Despite exercising its right to put off the decision for 30 days, has the Minister of Industry made a decision to allow the sale of RADARSAT-2?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows full well, I did on or about March 20 grant a 30 day extension for the period of review of this transaction.

As I have said previously, I will discharge the responsibilities that I have under the Investment Canada Act to the letter of the law. I will also fulfill the responsibilities that I have to the taxpayers of Canada under the various agreements between the Canadian Space Agency and this particular company. So, my friend will have to be patient.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs also claimed that the sale of RADARSAT-2 was the responsibility of the Minister of Industry, but MDA lawyers have confirmed that the Department of Foreign Affairs requested an application for a licence amendment to move ownership of RADARSAT-2 to the U.S.

Can the industry minister tell us who is in charge here? If he needed a 30 day extension to make his decision on MDA, why is the foreign affairs minister paving the way to sell Canada's world class space technology to a U.S. weapons manufacturer?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend mischaracterizes both the facts and the situation.

On or about March 20 MDA Geospatial submitted to foreign affairs, as it is required to do, a proposed amendment to the licence of RADARSAT-2.

The point, however, is that that is premature. Both that proposed amendment and in fact my friend's question depend first on the exercise of the authority by the Minister of Industry, myself, under the Investment Canada Act. Stated in other words, if the issue is RADARSAT-2 and the amendment of a licence, it depends on whether or not there is a sale of the company and I will decide that in due course.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Mary Schryer, Minister of Social Development and Minister Responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women for New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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POINTS OF ORDER

FRANKING PRIVILEGES

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Yesterday, the member for Halton, during his question in question period, said:

—the member for Burlington has broken the rules with an illegal mailing that he expects taxpayers to pay for.

I have followed every single rule set out by this House of Commons. The member's statement was inaccurate.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the member for Halton have the integrity to apologize and withdraw his statement of yesterday.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously, I would never bring an issue to this House that is that serious without having much justification and also without having verification.

Actually, the member opposite had delivered, this week, 29,000 copies of a 10 percenter to a postal substation which is only allowed to have 5,600 copies distributed. It is a flagrant abuse of the rules.

The party opposite has been sending out millions of pieces of mail and all of these mailings have been breaking the rules of this House.

Mr. Speaker, you are responsible for the oversight of these rules and I think it is time that you looked into this.

• (1510)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is mistaken and what he is characterizing as one 10 percenter is in fact very many. Furthermore,

Points of Order

he is suggesting that it is inappropriate to send them in other constituencies.

I have in my hands a mailing that the member for Halton sent in Edmonton, with the Liberal Party logo at the top, under the caption, "A Message From [and it has the name of the member for Halton] and the Alberta Liberal Caucus", whatever creature that is, talking about all the very important issues in Alberta that he cares about.

Obviously, the man is speaking with no basis in reality and he is in one of those glass houses, throwing stones that he really should not attempt.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was thinking of raising this prior to the Easter constituency week, but I decided not to out of generosity of spirit.

However, now that the member has refused to apologize, I want to bring to your attention the fact that, I believe it was on the Wednesday prior to our Easter constituency break, I received, and I believe all members of this place received, in an official House of Commons franked envelope from the member for Halton, an advertisement for his new book, entitled *Greater Fool*., what an appropriate title, *Greater Fool: The Troubled Future of Real Estate*, published by Key Porter Books Ltd., inviting us all to a book launch to go and buy his book.

I would like to know why that member is using taxpayer-funded parliamentary resources to sell his book from which he receives personal profits?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I think we are getting a little beyond points of order here.

I will hear the hon. member for Halton and then the matter will end.

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Just so the member is not under any false impressions, the invitation that I laid on his desk, hoping he would come to my event, was paid for by me, and I have the receipt. The envelopes in question were purchased from the House of Commons. It cost me \$8.95 to buy that box. Again, I really regret the member did not come—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order. He can go and see the member and look at the receipt in his office. We are not getting into that.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services on another point of order.

Routine Proceedings

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my answer to the supplementary question from the member for Beauséjour, I gave my colleague from Calgary Northeast an unexpected promotion in his career. He was actually a detective, not the chief of the Calgary police. I wanted to make sure that was clear.

The Speaker: I am sure that the member for Calgary Northeast will appreciate the correction.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE STATUTES TREATY

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, a treaty entitled "The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance Statutes" as amended. An explanatory memorandum is enclosed with this treaty.

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• (1515)

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the OSCE Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the election observation mission held in Kiev, Ukraine, on September 30, 2007.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports from interparliamentary delegations.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the joint meeting of the defence and security, economics and security, and the political committees held in Brussels, Belgium, and the European Commission on February 17 to 19, 2008.

As well, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association

respecting its participation at the defence and security committee held in Berlin, Germany, on November 5 and 6, 2007.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in relation to its study of the access to information request for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade internal report entitled, "Afghanistan 2006: Good Governance, Democratic Development and Human Rights".

There are a number of recommendations in this report, the most significant of which is that the government introduce a new Access to Information Act.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee also requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

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

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities entitled, "Employability in Canada: Preparing for the Future".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to the report.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in relation to the study of the Mulroney Airbus settlement entitled, "The Mulroney-Schreiber Affair—Our Case for a Full Public Inquiry".

The report contains only one recommendation as follows:

That the Government appoint a commissioner of inquiry pursuant to Part 1 of the Inquiries Act at the earliest possible date and that the commissioner be granted a broad mandate to inquire into the Mulroney-Schreiber Affair.

The report also includes two supplementary opinions and one minority report.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee also requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

As the chair of the ethics committee, I want to thank the permanent members of the committee and other members of Parliament who participated in the hearings for their support and efforts in discharging our collective responsibilities.

As well, no parliamentary committee can function properly without the experience and support of House of Commons and Library of Parliament personnel. Our clerks, legal advisors, research analysts, translators, and other technical and support personnel were invaluable in helping us to organize and present our hearings directly to the people of Canada. I am extremely grateful for their exceptional efforts under some of the most challenging and historic circumstances ever experienced in the Parliament of Canada.

• (1520)

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour, as chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, to present to the House the 15th report of that committee, concerning the list of members of standing committees.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this 15th report later this day.

[English]

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study on the implementation of Justice John Gomery's 19 recommendations.

The committee strongly recommends that the government immediately embark on a formal study of Justice John Gomery's 19 recommendations arising from the commission of inquiry into the sponsorship program and advertising activities and report back to the House of Commons within six months on how it intends to address the recommendations, including those recommendations that it rejects.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TREATY ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-530, An Act to ensure accountability in respect of Canada's obligations under international treaties.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege this afternoon to introduce a bill entitled, "an act to ensure accountability in respect of Canada's obligations under international treaties". If enacted, the Minister of Foreign Affairs or any minister responsible for implementing Canada's international obligations would be required to submit to each House of Parliament a report setting out Canada's progress in implementing the international treaties to which Canada is a signatory.

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

* * *

CURRENCY ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-531, An Act to amend the Currency Act and the Royal Canadian Mint Act (abolition of the cent).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, let me clear. This is the abolition of the cent, not the abolition of the Senate.

This bill is based on the premise that the penny is of no commercial value. It does not circulate and it costs more to produce than it is worth. I guess there are some parallels to the Senate. There are approximately 20 billion pennies—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the hon. member that he must not speak disrespectfully of the other place. It is a requirement of our Standing Orders, so he might want to restrain himself. The cent is one thing and he had better stick with that since that is the subject of the bill.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, that is right. This bill is about the abolition of the penny and I will keep it to that.

I am proud to introduce this bill. Many Canadians believe the penny is an expensive nuisance. They believe that we are spending \$130 million a year to produce something that no one wants or needs. Therefore, this bill would phase it out of circulation. It would make it so that the penny would no longer be legal tender as of January 1, 2009 and it would introduce a rounding system whereby prices would be adjusted to the nearest nickel.

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

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent of the House that the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented earlier today be concurred in.

• (1525)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion: "That, in the opinion of the House, September 21 of each year should be declared International Day of Peace."

The Speaker: Does the member for Papineau have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition from residents of Prince Edward Island with the appropriate number of signatures.

The petitioners are concerned about Canada Post switching residents from door-to-door mail delivery to community mailbox delivery without properly assessing the safety of these community mailboxes to the residents.

Many of the community mailboxes being established in the province of Prince Edward Island are no safer than regular mailboxes and have additional problems in terms of accessibility, litter, snow buildup and the environment.

The petitioners request Parliament to ensure proper consultations with the affected customers and a thorough assessment of the location of the community mailboxes before they are put in place.

UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition from constituents in my riding of Cambridge.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation that would recognize unborn children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against a pregnant woman.

[Translation]

CHARTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, workers throughout Quebec are signing a petition to ask that this government comply with Bill 101, which would make French the language of work in Quebec.

Once again, I have the honour of tabling the petitions from these workers—some 100 today—calling on this federal government to comply with Bill 101 immediately.

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of individuals in the Toronto area.

The petitioners state that there is currently no mechanism in law that specifically recognizes acts of domestic violence perpetrated by law enforcement personnel.

They ask for the government and the RCMP to do some studies on this matter to see how other jurisdictions handle these particular situations and ultimately introduce changes to the Criminal Code.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a number of petitions from thousands and thousands of Canadians in opposition to Senate Bill S-203, a placebo bill that would not be effective on animal cruelty, calling upon the government to enact effective animal cruelty legislation, such as Bill C-373, or for the government to implement a similar bill.

This is in addition to over 130,000 signatures that have already been presented to the House.

* * *

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 questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons 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 Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CORPORATE TAX CUTS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Conservative government's massive corporate tax cuts are destroying any balance between taxes for large profitable corporations and ordinary Canadians; they are stripping the fiscal capacity of the federal government; they are disproportionately benefiting the financial, oil and gas sectors, while leaving others behind, including manufacturing and forestry; and in so doing have failed to invest in those hard-hit sectors and the needs of everyday working Canadians; therefore, this House has lost confidence in the government.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Outremont.

I am very pleased to speak in favour of this motion. The motion demands a balanced fiscal approach to make life more fair for hard-working Canadian families.

The NDP believes there must be a place where businesses and families can prosper together. That is not what we see today. Over the last 20 years, successive governments have picked the boardroom table over the kitchen table.

[*Translation*]

They have helped those who are making record profits, like the big polluters and the banks, all the while neglecting the priorities of today's families who are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet.

Over the past 20 years, more than 50% of families have seen their income decrease. The 100 highest-paid CEOs now earn 218 times more than the average Canadian. In 9 hours and 33 minutes, they make the same amount that the average Canadian makes in an entire year.

In the past 20 years, the burden of providing government revenues has fallen increasingly to families as opposed to corporations. According to the last budget, the Conservative government plans to collect 12% more taxes from individuals but 14% less from corporations over the next three years. That is not fair, it is not balanced.

● (1530)

[*English*]

The contributions by corporations to the combined personal and corporate tax revenue of our country will decline to below 25% in the next three years. This new trend is due in large part to the huge corporate tax cuts announced in the 2007 economic statement.

The Conservative corporate tax giveaways are draining the fiscal capacity to build the kind of Canada that our Canadian people want us to build for them and their communities.

The Conservatives have surrendered 12.2%, nearly one-eighth of future federal revenues. The unbalanced, across the board nature of these cuts is stripping Canada's fiscal capacity. It is a great boon to the banks and the oil and gas companies. They are the ones making the profits, enormous profits, often at the same time as picking the pockets of the hard-working consumers across the country, those who are trying to buy some gas, or trying to take their money out of the bank or trying to pay their credit cards, but it does precious little to help out the entrepreneurs who are feeling the tough economic times.

The agenda means that fewer fiscal shock absorbers will be there to protect the middle class when we move into uncertain economic times. Therefore, it is very unwise and will leave more and more people behind as we find ourselves in tough economic problems.

Giving away billions of dollars to big banks and big polluters, while ignoring the key strategic investments in our ailing manufacturing and forestry sectors and in social priorities that Canadians are asking us to address, is creating irreversible damage. It is not something that can be fixed easily.

For the last 20 years, while governments have followed this unbalanced approach, every day families have suffered. Education is now out of reach for more and more families. Infrastructure is crumbling all across the country. The cost of prescription drugs is

Business of Supply

skyrocketing to the point where many people simply cannot afford the medications their doctors tell them they need to be well. While government hands out deep corporate tax cuts, over four million Canadians do not even have a family doctor.

[*Translation*]

While the federal government reduces Canada's fiscal capacity to provide the services families need, guess who will fill that void?

There are women in this country who work 24 hours a day trying to track down expensive, hard-to-find daycare centres while taking care of their elderly parents and trying to make ends meet as the cost of groceries climbs ever higher. It is working mothers who suffer under the misguided policies of this government.

● (1535)

[*English*]

It is time to put working families first. It is time for a balanced approach.

Not long ago in this chamber, we saw an earlier government propose a \$4.6 billion corporate tax giveaway. The NDP stood up and said it was the wrong approach and recommended that investments be made. Indeed, ultimately, that decision was made and we were able to adopt a budget that was balanced and that met those tests.

The NDP believes Canada must have a competitive tax regime for businesses, but not at the expense of hard-working families and not across the board giveaways to companies that do not need the help. We want Canada to be a great place to invest and for businesses to prosper, but they will not prosper if our communities crumble, our families cannot have their basic needs met on a daily basis and we cannot have the educated workforce that is needed.

Improvements for businesses and families need to move in lockstep together. That is how to keep the balance in shape. We should not be choosing one over the other, as the budget is doing. It is possible to do both. We are a strong, innovative and wealthy country. The problem now is that the few are going to be the beneficiaries of that gift in which Canadians should be sharing in a much more just, sensible and balanced way.

The NDP's motion is a motion of non-confidence. The Conservative government has had 26 months to turn things around and make life more affordable for middle class and everyday ordinary Canadians. However, it chose not to do that. It chose to put the corporations first. The champagne bottles were popping on Bay Street. As a result, the gap between the rich and the rest of Canadians is growing and nobody can prove to the contrary. In fact, all one has to do is spend a little time with Canadians in their homes and at their kitchen tables to know that is the hard reality they are facing.

Conservatives have shown that ordinary Canadians cannot have confidence they will make life more fair and affordable for them and their families. Therefore, it is time to take a more balanced approach. The NDP has worked for that for many decades, and we are not about to stop now.

Business of Supply

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the New Democrats states that our corporate tax cuts have disproportionately benefited the oil and gas sectors, but that flies in the face of the facts. In fact, in budget 2007 we began the phase-out of the accelerated capital cost allowance that applies to machinery, equipment and structures for the oil sands, both in situ and above ground. This, in effect, took away an advantage of billions of dollars that the oil sands previously received as a result of this indirect subsidy.

Clearly, the NDP's position on this is not consistent with the facts. I suspect the reason why those members have taken this position is they realize they have no chance of ever gaining electorally in the province of Alberta so they have decided to play electoral politics with an issue that is of national importance. A national party would not play that kind of regional politics, pitting one region of the country against the other.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I am having trouble grasping the essential logic of the member's question. What he is trying to claim is that the Conservative government is somehow taking action that is going to make life difficult for Albertans, but it is somehow the New Democrats' fault and we are somehow playing politics with it.

Here is the truth of the matter. We rose in this place many times calling for that subsidy to the big oil and gas companies to be removed. I recall having phrased it a number of different ways in the House on numerous occasions. Finally, despite the inaction of the previous government on the matter, the current government decided to respond with a three year phase-out. Guess what? It decided to give an across the board corporate profit tax reduction at the same time, far overriding any of the implications of this previous arrangement.

This is why the champagne corks were popping at Exxon. This is why we are making the claim that the government is putting the interests of those large and profitable companies first. If we needed any more proof, we could ask it why it will not do something to protect Canadians who get gouged at the gas pumps by the same companies it wants to help out with tax giveaways.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, as usual, I listened very carefully to the leader of the NDP addressing this House. I would like to know what he thinks about something that is dear to my heart, that is, the empty Conservative rhetoric served up to any member who has criticized or continues to criticize the government's inaction in response to the crises we are facing at home in Quebec. The leader of the NDP knows Quebec well. He even chose to hold a meeting there with his candidates, and received a warm welcome.

In Quebec there is a crisis, more specifically, a forestry crisis. Members who want to stand up for this particular issue are told that we do not have confidence in our businesses. But it has nothing to do with confidence in our businesses. They are experiencing a crisis. And something like the trust, which completely ignores the existence of private woodlot owners, is not what will help them.

I would like to know what the leader of the NDP thinks about the sort of nonsense we are hearing.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques. She is right; we received a very warm welcome from her fellow citizens. It is a beautiful part of the country, and people were very welcoming to the NDP team.

The member has every reason to bring up the crisis in the forestry industry, for which the government is doing absolutely nothing. Instead of making strategic investments for our society's key industries, it decided to indiscriminately give gifts to the largest companies—the most profitable.

This is an unacceptable policy, and that is why we brought this motion before the House.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, we will have a chance to see the Liberal Party of Canada's true colours. Once again, during this afternoon's question period, we heard the Liberals get all worked up about all of the appalling ruses they detected in how the Conservatives handled the budget. The Liberals criticized the Conservatives for having included immigration provisions in the budget bill.

If we are meant to take them seriously and to accept their statements at face value, we would expect them to vote against budget bills, just as, from time to time, they have to speak out against the Conservative government's decisions because they are the official opposition.

As usual, the Conservatives know exactly what to expect from the Liberals. They know that they can do whatever they want, including burying objectionable immigration provisions in a budget bill, because the Liberals are much too weak to stand up to them.

This afternoon, we are considering a motion that takes the Conservative government to task for the choices it made in the budget. The Conservatives made a lot of decisions that brought radical change to Canada, and now we are talking about something quite specific. I will give a few examples to illustrate.

Table 5.4 of the budget just tabled by the Conservatives reveals what they really think and betrays their true intentions. Specifically, beginning today—as the new fiscal year begins—and over just two years, revenue collected from personal income tax—from my colleagues, from me, from the people listening to us now, from workers and their families—will increase by 12% in the state's budget, whereas revenue from corporate income tax will drop by 14%. That is the shameful choice the Conservatives really made in the budget. Individuals will be paying 12% more, and corporations will be paying 14% less. People can check table 5.4 of the budget and see for themselves.

Business of Supply

We strongly object to this choice. What will the so-called official opposition do? I see that the Liberals are prepping their new star from Toronto Centre, who will undoubtedly rise to try to lecture us, as did his colleague who, yesterday, attempted to mislead the public with false figures on countries such as Sweden, Great Britain, Denmark and Norway. What tales did they tell yesterday? It was nonsense. What did his Liberal colleague say? He said that in the four above-mentioned countries, the corporate tax rate was lower than the Canadian rate. Is that so? Let us look at the facts.

Here, in Canada, with the most recent cut, the corporate tax rate is now 19.5%. It is important that we remember this figure of 19.5%. It will be further reduced by 4.5% to 15% by 2015. What is the current corporate tax rate in the other countries in question? It is 28% in Sweden; 30% in Great Britain; 30% in Denmark; and 28% in Norway. That is the reality, not the nonsense trotted out by the Liberals yesterday to try to justify the unjustifiable, that is their weakness, their softness, their lack of conviction and the fact that, once again, they will support the budget choices of the Conservatives. Conservatives or Liberals, it is all the same.

If the Liberals had the slightest amount of conviction, if they believed in anything, they would be getting up to criticize and challenge the Conservatives' budget.

• (1545)

Later, when the new member for Toronto Centre rises, we will see that they will no longer be content to sit on their hands.

The Minister of Finance dared to reduce corporate taxes that much only because the current and ineffective leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, the so-called official opposition, told him that he could reduce corporate taxes as much as he wanted.

Indeed, the Minister of Finance rose in this House and said that he would never have dared to reduce them so much. He is a Conservative. He would have wanted to, but he did not think he could. It was the current leader of the Liberal Party of Canada who told him he should do so and reduce them so much. This is exactly what he is now doing and it is scandalous.

Now, to try to ease their conscience, instead of simply hiding, ducking the issue, disappearing from the House or sitting on their hands, they are trying to tell us—and I cannot wait to hear it—that the Conservatives' budget choices are completely consistent with their own. And that party has the nerve to talk about social justice, a nation-wide affordable child care system and wait times at hospitals across Canada, which receive federal funding. It can say what it wants but the Liberal Party of Canada does not believe in anything. That is the simple truth, which will be revealed a little later.

• (1550)

[*English*]

On this side of the House, we are not afraid to stand up. We are not afraid to tell Canadians what is really going on here.

We can look at table 5.4 in the new Conservative budget if we want to understand what is going on. In that one table, there is a snapshot of the difference between the New Democratic Party of Canada and the Conservatives, but the Conservatives are being helped in this by the Liberal Party.

In that one table, we see the following: starting from today, when we are at the very beginning of a new fiscal year, over the next two years the part of the budget that comes from corporate income taxes is going to go down by 14%, while individual income taxes, which is what you, Mr. Speaker, and I and the people listening to us pay, are going to go up by 12%.

That is an increase of 12% for individuals and a decrease of 14% for the corporations. That is a scandal. The Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves for proposing it. The only reason they are doing it is because of the weakness of the Liberal Party.

Yesterday one of the minor ministers from the former Liberal government, a former revenue minister, went on the public record with something that was completely contrary to the facts. He named four countries, Sweden, Britain, Denmark and Norway, and said they had a lower rate of corporate taxation than Canada has.

Here are the facts. For somebody who was once in charge of revenue, it is surprising that he cannot count. In Canada with the most recent budget, we are now at 19.5% as our corporate tax rate. It is going to go down a further 4.5% between now and 2015, bringing it to 15%. The tax rate in Sweden is 28%. The tax rate in Britain is 30%. The tax rate in Denmark is 30%. The tax rate in Norway is 28%.

Hon. Bob Rae: Add the provinces, Tom, add them.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: That is what those birdbrains in the Liberal Party of Canada want to support. They want to support the Conservatives. They are against families. They are against social programs. They are against social justice. They have no vision. They have no convictions. They do not believe in anything.

More and more, the truth is coming out. Canadians are starting to decode the Liberals. I am just waiting to hear the new star from Toronto Centre, someone who once had the guts to come into this House and claim to represent social justice and progressive thought and who has now sold himself out to the bosses.

I can hardly wait to have him stand up and talk against families, against workers, in favour of tax increases for individuals, and against the average working family. That guy wants to give tax breaks to corporations.

Let him have it, I say, and let him know what really is going on out there in Canada. We can hardly wait because we are going to deal with him.

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the enthusiasm with which the member spoke. He certainly was animated, and he had the attention of the House, which sometimes is a rarity here.

I have a couple of comments. First, would it ever occur to him that perhaps the amount of revenue that is coming from individuals is going up because there are now some 800,000 more jobs? There are that many new people who, instead of being unemployed and collecting unemployment insurance as long as it lasts, now finally under this government have the opportunity to get a job from business that is staying in Canada because it has a more tax-friendly base than other countries that beckon. This is just a reality.

Business of Supply

I would also like to point out this fact when he complains about the price of fuel. He is talking about increasing taxes for people who produce fuel. Would it perhaps also occur to him that the price at the pump will increase if those guys have to pay more taxes? This is so elementary that I cannot believe he does not understand it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I hope you will give me as much time to answer the hon. member's question as you gave him to ask it.

[*English*]

I will answer in English for my colleague from Edmonton—Sherwood Park.

If he were a Liberal and not a Conservative, I guess the member would say that he is from Sherwood forest, because the Liberals love branding themselves as Robin Hood trying to help the poor, but the actual fact is that the Liberals do not believe in anything. They talk a good game when it comes to social programs and social justice, but they actually do not believe in anything.

Although I do disagree with the budgetary choices of the Conservative government, they exist, they are there, and the Conservatives themselves hold out for the fact that they are going to reduce by 14% the proportion. It is not a question of the global mass. The 800,000 workers do not change anything in the proportion.

The proportion of what is coming in from taxpayers individually is going to go up by 12%. The proportion of what is coming in from corporations is going to go down by 14%. Those are the numbers. It is in the Conservative budget in table 5.4. The member can look up the numbers. They are irrefutable.

However, what is even more important is what was done as a budgetary choice in the fall, with \$14 billion in tax cuts for the most profitable corporations. In Ontario or Quebec, where the soaring Canadian dollar is making it more and more difficult to export, manufacturing jobs have been lost by the hundreds of thousands and we are suffering terribly in the forestry sector.

The Minister of Finance stands up in the House all the time and says that he gave all those tax breaks and that is how he is helping corporations. The problem is that if a company did not make a profit last year it did not pay any taxes, so it is not getting any of those tax breaks. If the company is called EnCana, if it is based in Alberta, and if it is making a small fortune in profits, it just got a cheque for several tens of millions of dollars from the Canadian taxpayer. That is the problem.

• (1555)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Just for the edification of the hon. member for Outremont, the question took one minute and fifteen seconds and the answer one minute and forty seconds.

The hon. member for West Nova has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to listen to this dialogue on this economic question put forward by the NDP.

[*English*]

It is rich to listen to this because we know what the New Democratic members' economic policy is: their support for small businesses is to take all large businesses, tax them all the way down to small businesses, give subsidies to bankrupt businesses, and tax profitable businesses. They have no vision at all on economics and are quite disingenuous on social programs.

I remember that not so long ago in the House, when there was a minority government, we presented a budget. The leader of the NDP negotiated with the Liberal Party so that we brought forward a year or two years ahead some of our priorities that were not in that budget: housing, assistance for poverty, day care, and Kelowna. We brought them all forward. The NDP members were all very happy to boast about it and then they voted our government out and supported this one on the income trust scandal, which took about \$30 billion away from hard-working Canadians.

We cannot believe these people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I imagine the hon. member will be quite pleased to tell all the employees at Trenton Car Works that he agrees with the Conservatives' budgetary choices.

There are a number of companies in his province that are suffering in exactly the same way other companies in Quebec and Ontario are. That is why it is scandalous to have a political party like the Liberal Party of Canada, that has the constitutional right to call itself the official opposition party, but which in fact has become the official abstention party. Soon it will become officially abolished.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Oshawa.

First, I completely reject the premise of today's motion. Our Conservative government's historic tax reductions, both personal and corporate, have benefited innovators and entrepreneurs, those individuals who comprise Canadian businesses and the hard-working Canadians whom they employ. Accordingly, lower business taxes are clearly a positive. It appears that the NDP does not realize this, though our competitors in the industrialized world beyond our borders do understand it.

An arena in which Canadians compete for business must be allowed to do so operating in a fair business climate, and in that respect, competitive corporate tax rates are a clear positive. Most observers are universally in agreement with that. As Nancy Hughes Anthony, president and CEO of the Canadian Bankers Association pointed out:

Lower corporate taxes will enable Canada to compete successfully with other countries, stimulate sustainable long-term economic growth, and help to improve the standard of living for all Canadians.

It means creating quality jobs, attracting investment and talent, encouraging innovation, and building a strong tax base that can support the social programs that we hold dear.

Business of Supply

However, the NDP alone in the economic wilderness of a bygone era of high corporate and personal taxes does not understand that. It is still clinging to an old-fashioned regressive and discredited notion, namely, that big government, high taxes and huge government debt are the keys to prosperity. It would be amusing if it were not so sad, because it is clear that it has not learned a thing from the domestic and international examples of the last 50 years.

For everyone who doubts that, just listen to what the member for Toronto Centre had to say about the NDP's economic policies, someone who led the province as the NDP premier and implemented the very economic policy that the NDP advocates here today. He has derided today's motion as a tired and most off-base kind of economic jargon. My friend has assailed the NDP's economic policies as outdated and unrealistic.

The member for Toronto Centre, whom I welcome to the House, has admitted that he showed incredibly poor judgment when he implemented ill-advised policies such as this. We understand that he has learned greatly from his mistakes, namely that regressive and economically devastating high corporate tax policies are not the way this government wants to go, policies that killed investment and jobs in Ontario. After the benefit of hindsight, my colleague now says:

Our corporate taxes must be competitive. I know this is anathema to the NDP, but I can tell you that the [NDP leader] and the NDP are wrong about taxes.

We understand that. We understand the long term benefits of tax relief. We cut taxes to attract investment, to create jobs and to help sharpen Canada's competitive edge internationally. This is as straightforward as it is simple. That is what we are doing. We are taking concrete action to spur investment and jobs and to make Canada more competitive.

Tax measures introduced by this government since coming into office have provided tax relief approaching \$200 billion. Almost three-quarters of this relief benefits individuals directly, whether it be through personal income tax relief or GST reductions, a tax reduction which benefits all Canadians each and every time they make a purchase, which is millions of times a day across the country, including those Canadians with incomes that are too low to pay income tax.

We are building Canada to remain competitive and create a strong business environment. The reduction of corporate taxes is an important part of the strategy. That is why we are reducing the federal corporate income tax rate to 15% and making it the lowest corporate income tax rate among the major developed economies. This is a positive measure for the economy and for Canadians, and the NDP's assertion otherwise has no basis in reality.

● (1600)

Just listen to the praise from the actual drivers of the Canadian economy with regard to our Conservative government's corporate tax reductions. These are the people who create the jobs for Canadian workers whom the NDP claims to care about, who create the government revenue for the social programs that the NDP also claims to care about.

Listen to the Canadian Council of Chief Executives:

The significant corporate income tax cuts...will provide a powerful boost to Canada's ability to compete for investment and jobs in the global economy...[It] will

help companies to continue to invest and grow in Canadian communities, despite the rapid rise of the Canadian dollar and intense global competition.

Or listen to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters:

Canada is going to have a very attractive tax environment to retain and attract business investment....

...this keeps us in the game of international investment.

Or listen to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business:

Tax cuts were our members' number one priority by far, with just the vast majority saying that was the number one issue. So, they have hit that issue.

Even the NDP premier of Manitoba praised them, stating:

[The Conservative government's] tax reductions...in all fairness...are positive and we're going to see that through the economy.

The NDP is not listening to them, and it will not listen because it is stuck in the past. Sadly, it has no intention of embracing the realities of today. Again, it would be funny if it were not so sad, as it was sad when the NDP and the then Liberal government teamed up in 2005 and the result was to reverse the relatively minor corporate taxes that the government of the day introduced in its 2005 budget.

The NDP demanded that the corporate tax cuts be stripped from the budget in return for propping up a scandal-ridden Liberal government teetering on collapse due to the sponsorship scandal. The unprincipled Liberals naturally agreed.

We have also seen this type of Liberal approach more recently, when my Liberal friends refused to show up to support their own confidence motion or to vote against the government for fear of having to face the voters. If we consider the manufacturing sector, which the NDP claims to care about, it is suffering immensely as a result of this deal.

As the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters stated at that time, it is not action that will preserve Canada's industrial base. Manufacturers feel their pleas are not being taken seriously. They worry whether they understand the serious pressures that are facing them.

It is also sad that the NDP has opposed the support we have provided to the manufacturing and forestry sectors, support allowing them to better invest and compete. For example, we provided over \$9 billion in tax relief by 2012-13. We are also improving the availability and accessibility of financial support for research and development, and extending the enhanced scientific research and experimental development investment tax credit.

Business of Supply

We are also helping Canadians in their communities affected by a slowing global economy. To help vulnerable communities and laid-off workers, we announced a \$1 billion community development trust. This will support communities and workers experiencing hardship through no fault of their own, an initiative that was praised across the country by premiers and organizations from across the political spectrum, like the NDP premier of Manitoba, Gary Doer, who stated:

I also believe that this is very, very important to the regions and the communities in Canada and the money will be very, very helpful and important.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities applauded the initiative, saying that the federal government's decision to help Canadian communities hit by economic upheaval is more than welcome.

The initiatives I have focused on today will significantly benefit all Canadians. Our tax cuts will especially help Canadians compete for the jobs and investments of tomorrow. That has been recognized almost universally from Canada's business leaders and economists, and it is recognized of late by even the Liberal Party.

• (1605)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my hon. colleague's speech. He talked about the 2005 arrangement that was struck between the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party in order to access some \$5 billion of extra spending for well needed programs, including housing programs that the Conservatives claimed as their own in the last two year period.

Interestingly enough, over that time when we did not cut corporate taxes, when we did not reduce that percentage, we actually had a very robust economy. It has not impacted on businesses. That is the clear example. We did not see a downturn in the economy. We did not see businesses like banks or major oil companies leaving Canada because they did not get their corporate tax cut in 2005.

Why does the member think that his government's reckless action on reducing corporate taxes by almost 35% will give that added incentive to this economy when history has not shown that to be the case?

• (1610)

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are times when the Liberals wonder why they actually listened to the NDP at that time.

We have heard here already today comments from the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park about the number of new jobs that have been created. We are talking today about Canadians. We are talking about jobs for Canadians. We are talking about livelihoods. No Canadian wants to live on handouts. Every Canadian that I have ever spoken to wants to be paid for the work he or she can provide. Canadians want to help build this country. Since this government has taken office, there have been 800,000 new jobs created. That is why Canadians can hold their heads high.

We look across the border at the United States and we see some troubled times. We are seeing a strong Canadian economy and it is because of the pre-emptive moves of the finance minister under the leadership of the Prime Minister. This government has taken the initiative. We saw the dark clouds on the horizon. We saw what was

happening in the United States. We took the early initiative to cut taxes, to cut personal taxes, to lower the GST, so Canadians would have more of their hard-earned money to spend on themselves. They are the people who should be spending it. They should not be giving it to government. That is what makes Canadians proud.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the record. Earlier one of the members from the NDP said that I was comparing our federal corporate income tax rate to that of Sweden's. What he needs to understand is that there are two corporate income tax rates in Canada. One is a federal corporate income tax collected by the Government of Canada and the other is a provincial corporate income tax collected by the various provinces. The member for Outremont compared our federal corporate income tax rate in a federal state to that of a single corporate income tax rate of a unitary state like Sweden. The record needs to be corrected. The member needs to do some better research on this.

I would add that the NDP motion is flawed. The NDP members criticize us for disproportionately benefiting the oil and gas sector, but this flies in the face of the facts. The fact is that our government has eliminated the accelerated capital cost allowance for the oil sands sector and has disproportionately benefited the mining and manufacturing sectors in this country through other measures we have introduced in our budget. I suspect the NDP has done this because its members represent ridings with manufacturing and mining interests, whereas none represent any ridings that have any significant oil sands interests.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for clarifying another false assumption by the NDP, continuing on all of the false assumptions that we see in this motion today.

NDP members seem to be so concerned about corporations actually making a profit. I might share with this House that the oil and gas sector provides—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but he must now share his time, as he had stated 15 minutes ago, with the hon. the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to respond to the motion of the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

Let me preface my comments by stating that I am in no way intending to diminish the challenges facing the manufacturing or the forestry sectors. Rather I want to clearly show Canada the hypocrisy of the member's motion and underscore the radical socialist agenda that the NDP is trying to peddle to Canadians.

Let me state at the onset that the government takes the issues facing the manufacturing industry very seriously and we are addressing them head on. We have brought forward billions of dollars in assistance and every time the NDP has voted against these measures.

Business of Supply

What is key to the manufacturing sector and the forestry sector is the need to have the right economic fundamentals so our companies and firms can put their full attention and efforts into responding to these world challenges. It is clear that Canadian manufacturers are determined to compete and succeed in the global economy. The NDP does not seem to comprehend that if Canada does not have an internationally competitive economy and tax structure, Canada will not attract new investment, the economy will go into recession and jobs, which rhetorically the NDP members say they would like to defend, will dry up.

When the economic fundamentals are working, businesses have the best opportunity to make their mark and succeed.

Thanks to this Conservative government, the fundamentals of Canadian economy are working and jobs are being created. While other global economies are experiencing uncertainty, we are alone in the G-7 in maintaining ongoing budget surpluses and falling debt burden. Our unemployment is at the lowest in 33 years and our overall employment grew by roughly 360,000 jobs in 2007.

Yes, there are challenges, but also opportunity to ensure that all Canadians share in the benefit from our economic success. Certainly this desire extends to include the manufacturing sector overall. It is not an easy task. While the new jobs generated by our economic gains in thriving sectors offset losses in other sectors, the problem is more complex than that. Otherwise the significant measures the government has introduced to encourage skill development, such as the apprenticeship tax credit and the apprenticeship incentive grants, would represent a sufficient response. However, in a country as large and diverse as Canada, these challenges have a real and profound impact on small communities that have come to rely upon a particular manufacturing plant or mill.

The government took action to respond to these kinds of adjustment pressures. The \$1 billion community development trust represents our government's support for provincial and territorial efforts to build a stronger, more prosperous future for communities and workers affected by current economic volatility. The trust allows provinces and territories the flexibility to invest in those projects that best help vulnerable communities and individuals, while respecting Canada's international obligations.

Do not take my word for it. Five provinces, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador, have stepped up to leverage the money provided in the trust since it was announced on January 10. We have every confidence this money will be put to good use. By working together, the federal, provincial and territorial governments can best help take the economic challenges we face today and turn them into economic opportunities tomorrow.

The community development trust is one way the government has responded to the needs of workers, businesses and regions affected by economic difficulties.

Despite the NDP's rhetoric, the government has delivered much more. Conservatives delivered the targeted initiative for older workers, which the government seeded with \$72.5 million from budget 2006 and has recently expanded with a further \$90 million

source from budget 2008. Here is another initiative to be delivered at the community level.

Canadian industry needs the skills and knowledge of workers 55 to 64 years of age, especially in the communities that rely upon single industries. While these workers are laid off because of the economic problems in the industry, we need to find some way to keep their knowledge and skills in the labour market.

These are examples of ways in which we have taken tangible action to address the challenges the hon. member mentions in his motion, but we have done much more.

The hon. member refers to tax measures. His motion falsely insinuates that our tax policies do not benefit Canadian companies in all sectors, including those in manufacturing and in forestry. Only the NDP cannot comprehend that cuts to the general corporate tax rate are advantageous to manufacturing and forestry companies. These tax cuts will help manufacturing and forestry companies be more competitive, create wealth and, most important, create jobs for ordinary Canadians.

• (1615)

With the tax measures introduced by the government, manufacturers and processors will receive over \$9 billion in tax relief by 2012-13. Our initiatives will give Canada the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G-7 by 2010. Furthermore, we have also extended the accelerated capital cost allowance for investment in machinery and equipment in the manufacturing and processing sector for three additional years.

This was a key recommendation of a unanimous 2007 industry, science and technology report, supported by the NDP member for Windsor West. When it came time to stand up and be counted, the radical socialists voted against their own critic's recommendations. It is unbelievable.

We have allocated \$33 billion to the building Canada infrastructure plan, including \$2.3 billion for trade related infrastructure and \$2.1 billion for gateways and corridors, of which at least \$400 million will be in support of a new Windsor-Detroit crossing, an important crossing for manufacturers.

Our 2008 budget also has introduced improvements to the SR and ED tax credit program and provides \$34 million more per year for collaborate research for specific industries, including manufacturing, important elements that will contribute to improving innovation so Canadian companies can compete with the best.

For auto manufacturers, we are investing \$250 million over five years to support R and D projects that will produce green automotive technologies. Coming from Oshawa, I know how important that is.

Business of Supply

We are also helping our manufacturers to extend their business globally. We have improved Export Development Canada's export guarantee program to assist small and medium sized manufacturers in fulfilling export contracts. This is in addition to the \$174 million over two years to increase security and minimize delays at our borders. These measures brought forward by this Conservative government will surely benefit our industries, including manufacturing and forestry, attract new investments and will create jobs in Canada.

For the forestry industry, we have resolved the costly and prolonged softwood lumber dispute. The agreement eliminates U.S. countervailing and anti-dumping duties. It brings an end to costly litigation. It protects provincial forest management policies and it has returned over \$5 billion to Canadian producers. Again, sadly, the NDP voted against this deal.

We have also provided \$127.5 million to strengthen the long term competitiveness of the sector and a further \$200 million to facilitate action to combat the mountain pine beetle.

We have provided \$25 million for a forest communities program that will assist 11 forest based communities to make informed decisions on the forest land base. Budget 2008 allocated \$10 million over two years to promote Canada's forestry industry to international markets as a model of environmental innovation and sustainability.

Over the past two years this Conservative government, led by our Prime Minister, has indeed taken important steps to set the overall business climate so our industries can grow and become more globally competitive.

What today underscores is the hypocrisy of the NDP toward Canada's manufacturing and forestry industry and workers and the radical socialist agenda that it is trying to peddle to Canadians. However, Canadians will not have the wool pulled over their eyes. Canadians know this government is showing leadership and is delivering for manufacturers and forestry workers and industry when it needs it the most. It is the NDP that must stop playing games with the lives of workers and should start supporting the government's endeavours.

• (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Manufacturing and Forestry Industries; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Afghanistan.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to some of the things the hon. member brought up in his speech.

He referred to a competitive advantage that we would have with tax cuts in our country. In reality, one of the biggest competitive advantages we have in the country, vis-a-vis our major trading partner, is our public medicare system. To corporations in the country, that represents a significant advantage over American companies, and it is something we have to maintain. To maintain it, we need revenue and we need to have the balance of corporations supporting the revenue flow to these types of activities.

What we see now is a huge corporate tax cut. Does this help my riding? We have a diamond mining industry. Last summer I spent an extensive period of time interviewing the chief executive officers of different mines. Was their concern corporate tax cuts? No. Their concern was public investment in infrastructure that would allow those mines to stay open longer, that would allow those mines to exploit the resources.

Where will we find the dollars to invest in my territory to pull off the kind of continued resource development that can lead to profits in our country and a fair share for Canadians?

• (1625)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the member's question further delineates the hypocrisy of the NDP.

The hon. member talks about infrastructure needs. I am so proud of the government. The government has invested a record amount in infrastructure. We are talking about \$33.1 billion in new infrastructure, the biggest single investment in infrastructure since the second world war. What did the NDP members do? They stood up proudly and voted against it.

The member said that the health care system was important to Canadians. I am passionate about that. The Canadian health care system is my background. How is it supported? It is supported through the taxation base of the Canadian taxpayers and our corporations. To have a solid base, we have to be competitive internationally.

Whether he realizes it or not, Canada competes globally. We are not in a vacuum. We must be players in the world and in the world economy. The government is taking strong action to make sure Canada is not a follower but a leader in the new world economy.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

I am obviously not surprised to hear yet another Conservative member boasting of his government's leadership and talking to us about pride, since self-praise has become their trademark.

What I really want to know is, how can such language be used when the Conservative government has completely ignored an entire sector of the economy, Quebec's forestry and private woodlot owners, and when we are dealing with an unprecedented crisis that will go on for a very long time? To the Conservatives, this crisis does not exist and they did nothing about it in their budget.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the forestry sector right now in Canada is facing unprecedented challenges. We know there is an economic slowdown in the United States.

Business of Supply

The government took leadership. Early on we settled the softwood lumber dispute, a dispute that went on while the former Liberal government sat on their hands and did absolutely nothing. The Liberals could not negotiate a deal if their lives depended on it.

With the softwood lumber dispute settlement, we returned over \$5 billion to the softwood lumber industry, something that was unprecedented. More important, we ended the costly litigation.

With the forestry sector, we took the leadership with our community development trust. If she had listened to my speech, she would have heard that. She would have noted that the provinces that have signed on to this are taking an initiative, leveraging that money from the Conservative leadership to ensure their sectors will remain strong.

The independent member, a former member of the Bloc, will never deliver a thing for Quebec. She will always be yelling from the outside. She will never be inside.

[*Translation*]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to share my time with my new colleague, the hon. member for Toronto Centre. I am also very pleased to tell you that the Liberals will be voting against this NDP motion.

[*English*]

The simple fact of the matter is that Liberals understand that wealth creation and social justice are both important, whereas the federal NDP, mired in the class wars of the 1960s, does not care about wealth creation and does not understand the first thing about it.

We on this side of the House understand that Canada, in a global economy, is in competition with many countries, not least of which is the United States, to attract capital and jobs to this country and to retain our domestic capital and companies.

We understand that living next door to the world's only superpower we have to create a special Canadian advantage, so that we can be able to level the playing field and compete with the United States.

Until recently, we did have a Canadian advantage. It was called a weak currency. It was cheaper to do business in Canada and business flowed into Canada taking advantage of our cheap currency. We do not have that any more.

Therefore, we need to create a new Canadian advantage to attract capital and jobs to this country and that new Canadian advantage, according to the Liberal Party, and we said this weeks before the government did, is to create a low corporate tax rate, a corporate tax rate substantially lower than the United States, something in the order of 10 percentage points.

That we believe will replace the weak currency as a new Canadian advantage and will serve this country well to improve productivity, competitiveness and attract jobs into this country.

I was a student in England in the late 1960s and the rhetoric of the NDP members is still back in the class war of the 1960s. Their rhetoric sounds just like the rhetoric of the Labour Party under Harold Wilson in the late 1960s.

The NDP members should understand that other social democratic parties around the world in Scandinavia and Britain, and I would include a lot of provincial NDP governments led by fine people like Gary Doer, Ed Schreyer, Allan Blakeney and my new colleague, have evolved too. As governments, they have to understand the realities of the world.

Just to show that NDP members are innumerate, the numbers cited by the member for Outremont, claiming that Canada had lower corporate taxes than Scandinavia or Britain, are totally wrong because we have to include the corporate tax rate for the whole country, not just the federal government.

Therefore, Canada's corporate tax rate in 2007 according to the IMF is 36% versus 25% in Denmark, 26% in Finland, 28% in Norway, 28% in Sweden, and 30% in the U.K. So, the member is out to lunch on the numbers which is typical of the federal NDP.

The true numbers indicate that the reconstructed social democratic movement of the world understands globalization, understands global realities, and those countries have adjusted. They understand that in order to create wealth, jobs and productivity we have to compete with lower corporate tax rates and those countries have done it.

The federal NDP members are in the class war mentality where any corporate tax cut is just seen as a sop to the rich. They do not understand, as their Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, British fellow social democrats learned long ago, that we have to create wealth before we can redistribute it, and that in order to compete in this world and get jobs it makes sense to have lower corporate tax rates.

There is a certain chicken and egg question here. Why are the federal NDP members almost alone in the world in being the Neanderthal version of the global social democratic movement? Are they Neanderthal because they have never formed government and therefore never had the opportunity to learn about realities, or have they never formed government because everyone knows they are Neanderthal?

I suspect it is a little bit of both. They are Neanderthal because they have never been government and they have never been government because they are Neanderthal. I suspect that will go on for some time, but I will leave it to academics to analyze this sociological chicken and egg question.

• (1630)

Before the Conservatives become too enthused with my speech, let me say that if the NDP is clueless on wealth creation, the present Conservative government, and I would not say the same about all Conservatives, is clueless about social justice.

Just as the NDP has never seen a social program it did not like, the Conservatives have never seen a tax cut that they did not think was the panacea for all Canadian problems.

Business of Supply

Whereas the reality is that Liberals are in favour of corporate tax cuts. We came to that conclusion before the government did. We do not think that corporate tax cuts alone are sufficient to solve all the problems of the Canadian business world.

That is why we, unlike them, thought that the recent Ontario budget was a good budget because the provincial Liberals addressed business taxes by eliminating the capital tax, but they also understood the importance of investment in infrastructure, investment in training and retraining, and providing jobs for displaced workers and helping communities in distress. The provincial Liberals also understand, as we do, the importance of direct support for the manufacturing sector.

One litmus test to which the finance minister did not have an answer, but we now know that his answer was no, was whether he would match the \$17 million offered by the Ontario government to keep the Windsor auto plant open. He said no because he has an ideological aversion to that sort of thing. He thinks that tax cuts alone are sufficient to do the job, when it is perfectly evident that tax cuts alone are not sufficient to do the job.

We on this side of the House are not only going to vote against this silly NDP motion, we are indeed proud to vote against this NDP motion. At the same time, this does not imply support for the extreme laissez-faire ideology put forward by the government.

•(1635)

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the NDP I could not help but recall Churchill's famous quote. I think the NDP goes back a lot further than 50 years ago. It sounds like it is going back 100 years with its rhetoric. The quote of Churchill was that: "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries." That is the type of quote that I thought really registered with some of the rhetoric that I heard today.

I do appreciate the point that the member raised about corporate tax rates. Being of Irish ancestry, the miracle in western Europe over the last 20 or 25 years has been the Republic of Ireland. Let us look at the performance of that economy, from 1986 up to the present, and at the current level of income, the growth rates and unemployment rates and so on.

I am sure that the member for Markham—Unionville, who is a professional economist, knows more about what went on in the Republic of Ireland than I do. I have read some things about it. There have been terrific results for that society. People are returning to Ireland from all over the world. It is a place to be and it has a terrific record to bestow upon itself.

It seems to me that the corporate tax rate in the Republic of Ireland, if I am not wrong, is 12%. At different times the corporate tax rate has been as low as 10%. I wonder if the member from Markham could comment on the miracle of Ireland and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, let me make two quick comments. I agree with much of what the hon. member said, although he does in a sense typify the Conservative attitude that corporate tax cuts are enough in and of themselves to do everything.

Corporate tax cuts played a significant role in the Irish miracle. He should also understand that there was a long term investment in post-secondary education which was critical. Also, the existence of the European Union which provided a huge market plus the subsidies the European Union gave to Ireland played a role.

Yes, the corporate tax cuts were a very significant element, but they were not in and of themselves sufficient to do the job.

As for the equal sharing of misery, if the federal NDP ever became the Government of Canada, I agree it would be the equal sharing of misery, given its Neanderthal understanding of the economy.

Once we get to progressive social democratic parties, such as in Sweden, Norway and the U.K., then I think they could do very well. In fact, one reason why the NDP will never come to power is that the Canadian Liberal Party is not unlike the new Labour Party in Britain.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly say that if corporate tax cuts were the panacea to all the problems to help Canadians in this country, I would like the hon. member to explain to me why in my province, since I moved there in 1988, we now have an increase in the number of food banks.

We now have fuel banks to help people stay in their homes. We have obscene lineups now for medicare. Many children cannot get proper education. Seniors cannot get the help they need. Pharmacare prices are out of control and this from the panacea of corporate tax cuts of \$100 billion in 2000 which are continuing. Every single time we hear that we are told that it is going to make Canadians prosper.

I would like the hon. member to tell my constituents, with increases in the number of food banks, fuel banks, school supplies we have to buy for kids now because their parents cannot afford it, pharmacare and medical waiting times, why have all these things increased under the Liberals' leadership and now the Conservatives?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must not have heard what I said. My point was explicitly that according to our side of the House corporate tax cuts are not a panacea. He just said we thought they were a panacea.

My point is that corporate tax cuts are a panacea, they will solve everything if one is a Conservative. If someone is a Liberal, corporate tax cuts are a very important part of wealth creation, so we favour them, but we are equally concerned about social justice and the environment.

Business of Supply

That is why we favour major social programs like child care, like Kelowna, like our 30-50 poverty plan. Our leaders announced a hugely aggressive poverty plan to reduce total poverty by 30% and child poverty by 50% in five years. But to do all those things, we also need to create the wealth and that is the part of the equation the NDP never—

• (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to my colleague from Markham—Unionville for giving me the chance to participate in this debate. This is my first intervention in a debate in the House of Commons since 1982, so you will appreciate that in these 10 minutes I am not going to give a long, nostalgic commentary on the last period of time.

I know that is going to disappoint many here, but I want to say it is great to be back in the House and it is great to be welcomed in a very open spirit by my colleagues.

To have been accused by the member for Outremont of having sold out to the bosses and to being a traitor to the working class is a pleasure, if I may say so. I feel honoured to be considered in that particular pantheon by the member for Outremont.

But like me, the member for Outremont has a problem and that is that most of his thoughts are in print. I have this problem and so does he.

I know that members opposite are going to be culling. In fact, when the guy was fired as the Tory candidate in my riding, he had three binders and those binders somehow found their way to my office, so I have the binders the members have and I go to tab three and tab five. So, I know all the quotes the members are bring up.

The member for Outremont in 2002 in the National Assembly of Quebec had this to say about private enterprise. He said:

[*Translation*]

We are already taxed more than anyone else in North America. And that is because the people in our government insist on pretending to be businesspeople, but they do not let the free market determine which companies survive and which ones fail.

On April 16, 2002, the member for Outremont also said:

A government exists to create conditions so that private companies, the real ones, can have conditions where they can invest and create something.

That is what the member for Outremont said, although he seems to have forgotten. I do not know exactly what happened. All I know is that, when he was a member of the National Assembly and a minister in Quebec, he knew full well, just as everyone who has been in power knows, that people must be able to create something, to invest, as he said, and to create wealth. Without wealth and prosperity, a government cannot create social justice and help people.

[*English*]

I do not have time at this moment to give a full reflection on what I feel about the motion that has been put forward, except to say that I rise with a certain sense of sadness because I have come through an election campaign that was very interesting. The Green Party put

forward positive proposals. I did not agree with all of them but they were there, substantive, thoughtful and creative.

My colleagues from the Conservative Party ran, basically, on a platform of anti-crime, anti the candidate, of course, and anti our leader, and that was the campaign.

The New Democratic Party ran on a threefold campaign. It had three elements. The first element was pure gimmickry. The second element was class warfare, of which we have heard more today. When was the last time someone stood in the House and used the language of saying “another member has sold out to the bosses?” What has happened?

My colleague from Markham—Unionville talks about going back to the class warfare of the 1960s. This is not going back to the class warfare of the 1960s. This is going back to the class warfare of the 1930s. This is going back to the class warfare of the 19th century. This is a truly sad commentary. Then we add the third element of the campaign, which is character assassination.

There is nothing that anybody in the House can say about me that I have not heard 1,000 times. It does not bother me, except that it saddens me when a party, which alleges to be in favour of creating greater prosperity and social justice, has a mentality that says that if we create business conditions, which in fact allow businesses to make money, that is a terrible thing. I do not get it. It is a sad commentary.

Then the member brought forward his devastating facts, presumably from the NDP research, which are all subsidized, which say that we were wrong yesterday when we pointed out that there are a great many social democratic countries that have recognized that they can actually lower business taxes and it helps the overall prosperity of their economies. Then he stood up and said that was not true, that we had the facts wrong. He recited all the information but forgot one simple fact: Canada is a federal country. It is a reality of our country.

Therefore, when we look at the taxes that are businesses are facing, we cannot just compare the federal tax rate to the Swedish unitary tax rate. We need to look at the overall tax rate. My colleague from Markham—Unionville gave those statistics very clearly.

It is quite pathetic to have all the rhetoric, all the overblown stuff, all the language, the gimmicks, the class warfare and the character assassination. That party, which at one time was leading the way on social policy and was setting the mark with respect to where Canada should go, has now been reduced to this really sad state of affairs.

The member for Outremont made a point of saying, in very flowery language, that he was looking forward to seeing how the member for Toronto Centre would possibly escape from this trap, which had been so effectively set by the New Democratic Party, how he would be able to live with himself, wake up in the morning and face the mirror because he sold out to the bosses and has now totally fallen in with a capitalist class.

How would he be able to live with himself? The answer is very easily because, like most social democrats around the world, I recognize that business success is not the enemy of social justice. It is quite simply that.

Business of Supply

I had the great honour of leading a province through a very difficult recession. I know my friends opposite have said a lot and will say a lot about that, but I want to say this to my friends. If companies are unsuccessful, it hurts everyone. If companies are unsuccessful, it hurts the poorest of the poor. If companies are unsuccessful, it hurts the weakest of the weak. If companies are unsuccessful, it hurts every Canadian.

● (1645)

I want companies to be successful in this country because I want to create a climate for social justice and I want to create a climate for sustainability. That is the kind of Canada that the Liberal Party and my leader, Stéphane Dion, want to lead and that is the kind of country we want to have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I was not standing to cut the hon. member's speech short. I was just standing to remind the hon. member for Toronto Centre, as it has been a while since he has been in this place, that we do not refer to our colleagues by proper name. We use ridings or titles.

However, it seems like he has finished his speech, so we will move on to questions and comments. The hon. the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the member for Toronto Centre here to the House of Commons. I was quite taken with his comments. Although he has moved part of the way, he could have come a little further and sat on this side of the House because the comments I heard from him today were very much in keeping with the philosophy of our government, which is that the success of corporations will provide the financial basis to create better social conditions here in Canada.

I hope the member continues in that vein and I wish him a lot of success but not too much success in this House.

● (1650)

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the President of the Treasury Board and I take them in the spirit in which they were offered. I am perfectly well aware that on the first few days one is here very nice things are said and, from my experience in two other times, the only other time we hear similar comments are on the day we are actually leaving the chamber. I will take these comments in the spirit with which they were offered.

It was a very famous Conservative, Edmund Burke, who once said "there is nothing more dangerous than governing in the name of a theory", and I am sure you, Mr. Speaker, will be familiar with that comment. I think I can mention Edmund Burke's name because he is dead. Although he was a member of the House of Commons but not this one.

However, what troubles me about the Conservative Party is that it has, in my view, slipped over into the error almost on the other side of where the NDP has gone. In a sense, we have three ideological parties in the chamber. We have the Bloc, which is committed to the breakup of the country and is committed to a very old ideology of nationalism which is quickly becoming more and more irrelevant. We have the Conservative Party on the opposite side, the government side, that is intentionally ideological. We have a New Democratic Party that, as I have described, has somehow failed to

turn and failed to move. We have a Liberal Party that is a pragmatic, practical and progressive party and one that I am very proud to be a member of.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say to my colleague for Toronto Centre that he obviously had difficulty understanding the quote he read earlier, and therefore I will explain it. I was speaking against subsidies to corporations. In his day, they were called corporate welfare bums. There was nothing inconsistent about it.

For the record, he stated earlier that Canada is a federal country. He is right. If he takes a look at the OECD data, he will realize that Canada, as a federal country, already had a combined tax rate lower than that of other comparable federal countries, notably the United States and Germany. And that was before the proposed 6% reduction.

Contrary to what his colleague, the former Minister of Revenue, stated earlier, my figures are correct. If we do a nation-to-nation comparison, Canada is already well under the tax rate of other countries.

My question for the new member for Toronto Centre is simply as follows. He talked about personal attacks, but he is the only one engaging in them. I will stick to the facts. Does he support, yes or no, the decision to increase personal income tax by 12% and to lower corporate income taxes by 14% as proposed by the Conservatives? Yes or no?

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, the member for Outremont is changing what he said. If he goes back and looks at the blues he will see that he actually said that we were wrong. He mentioned a number of Scandinavian countries and he is wrong.

With respect to whether our tax rates will be lower than the United States, I think they need to be lower.

On the corporate side, as my colleague from Markham—Unionville has said, these are tough decisions that governments need to make. We need to look at our competitive advantage, how we will attract investment and how we will keep investment. We are a smaller country. We have many competitive issues to deal with and that is a simple fact.

As for what the relative share of income tax and business tax should be, the answer to that is that we need to recognize that as we go into a downturn, as we go into a deeper problem with respect to what is happening in the United States and elsewhere, corporations will make less money and therefore will be paying less tax. From hard experience, this puts an increasing burden on everybody.

I would tell the members of the New Democratic Party that they are making a false choice and that they are doing it in all the rhetoric that is there. They ask whether we have social housing or whether we have bank profits. They want to know whether we have this or that. The answer is that we need both. We need to have successful companies and we need to have investment in housing. We need to look practically as a country—

Business of Supply

•(1655)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today on the NDP motion. I think the Bloc Québécois will be in favour of the motion because, in general, it condemns the economic policy of the federal government. The policy is not sufficiently tailored or relevant to the current economic framework, to our economic reality.

The motion states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the Conservative government's massive corporate tax cuts are destroying any balance between taxes for large profitable corporations and ordinary Canadians; they are stripping the fiscal capacity of the federal government; they are disproportionately benefiting the financial, oil and gas sectors, while leaving others behind, including manufacturing and forestry;—

Basically the Conservative government has chosen to take a completely and purely ideological approach by saying that it was uniformly cutting corporate taxes in order to stimulate the economy. But we see that many businesses, particularly in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, are not currently making any profit. They will not derive any benefit from the return on investment associated with this policy of general tax cuts. At the same time, the Conservative government has deprived itself of a source of revenue available to boost the economy. Instead it has chosen to put \$10 billion of this year's surplus towards the debt.

And this is happening at a time when the very well run companies in the forestry industry are in serious difficulty because of the crisis in that sector. In my riding for example, Maibec, a very solid company, is in trouble, as is Bois Daaquam, where workers are having to reach a compromise with the employer to peg their wages to the price of wood. Companies and workers are making real efforts, but the Conservative government is not showing the same flexibility. It is sad.

As early as last fall, when it released its economic statement, the government should have proposed not only widespread tax cuts, but also an action plan to help the forestry and manufacturing industries and give them the tools to compete and create competitive products.

The Conservatives take a "survival of the fittest" approach: let the strongest survive and if the others disappear, too bad. The government is acting as though it were a company, but it is not. To run the country, the government has to consider the labour situation, the effects on workers, the impact of the economy on the entire population. The Conservative government has abdicated that responsibility.

In that sense, the NDP motion is completely justified. In my opinion, this House should have lost confidence in this Conservative government. We said this when the budget was brought down. If the official opposition had stood firm, if the Liberals had seen things through to their logical conclusion, we would be in an election campaign today and we could pass judgment on the actions of this government, which decided to give priority to big, profitable companies, to multinational corporations, instead of helping the

companies in the forestry and manufacturing industries that are in trouble.

The Conservative government has also decided not to help workers aged 55, 56 or 58, with 25 or 30 years' experience. The Conservative approach is to let them find another job. Then, if they cannot find a job, they can apply for social assistance, because, in any event, it is their fault if they no longer have a job.

This practice, this philosophy imported directly from the American right, is unacceptable. It is not in line with the values of Quebecers and Canadians. It is the government's responsibility to help build prosperity. Prosperity does not happen by itself. It is not created just by market forces, but by the choices the government makes. And the government has abdicated its responsibility to help to create prosperity.

The motion says that quite clearly. We would have perhaps taken a slightly different position than that of the NDP about whether or not tax cuts were necessary for all businesses, but certainly not about the current percentage, or about the non-existent assistance for businesses that are not generating profits. This is unacceptable.

Since last fall, the Bloc Québécois has been making constructive proposals. This week, the House passed a Bloc motion calling for an action plan in the forestry industry. The House approved the motion tabled by the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, which contained seven measures to help the forestry industry.

•(1700)

Thus, the House sent a message to the government, telling it that such measures were needed. But the government is still not moving.

The purpose of the NDP motion today is simply to ensure that the public will be able to evaluate the situation. We have a minority government. We would have expected the Conservatives to listen in order to find methods that correspond to what most Quebecers and Canadians want. But they continue to take an approach that pushes us straight into the wall.

The United States is in a recession, and Quebec and Canada are experiencing a major economic slowdown that will, unfortunately, get worse over the next few months. Since 85% of our exports go to the United States, we should consider that if there is a reduction in American buying power, we will be the first victims. The Conservatives' approach, to continue to cut spending, is the same one taken by the Republicans in 1928-29, just before the great depression. And if there had not been changes, if Roosevelt had not become president and implemented the New Deal, the depression never would have ended.

A government has to be pragmatic and implement measures that are in line with the new economic reality. The current economic reality is not the same as it was two or three years ago. It has changed a lot and is still changing. The government did not adapt to this new reality in its economic statement last fall and even less so in this year's budget.

Business of Supply

The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology proposed an action plan a year and a half ago with 22 recommendations that were unanimously adopted by all the political parties. The government has adopted just one half-measure out of all those recommendations.

We have pressed on. The Standing Committee on Finance has adopted a motion whereby the fiscal measures adopted by the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology would be implemented by the government, but the government once again is remaining silent. The federal government has shirked its responsibility.

We know that the hon. members in this House are in regular contact with the people in their ridings. We also know that ideology has had greater power than the wishes of the people. I challenge the Conservative members from Quebec to tell us that people would prefer to see \$10 billion go toward the debt rather than investing some of that money to help the economy.

I challenge the Conservative members to deny, when it comes to the older workers issue, that Quebec and Canada want to adopt a measure of compassion to provide these people—who have worked for 20, 25 or 30 years—with an income to see them through to their pensions.

We are not saying that all older workers must benefit from an income security program. We believe we should help those who have done everything they can, in other words, tried to find employment, have taken training courses and have joined adjustment committees, but to no avail. They have to be given a tool to bridge the gap to their pension. It is important. It is in society's best interest on a financial and human level to allow this type of thing.

The situation facing the forestry sector will only become completely absurd later on. Younger workers are being laid off, based on seniority. Older workers are keeping their jobs while younger workers are leaving. In a few years, when the older workers have left their employment, there will be no younger workers around to revive the industry.

We should have been able to develop more flexible ways to deal with the inevitable layoffs, such as offering incentives to older workers, for instance, a supplement or possible income support until they receive their pension so they can leave the labour market, thereby allowing younger people to keep their jobs and meet labour needs later on. Yet this Conservative government did not show the necessary flexibility. That is not the Conservative way, which is too bad.

And yet this is not the first time we have talked about it or called for action. For months and months now, the Bloc Québécois and other parties of this House have been calling on the government to do something.

If the official opposition had not run into all those problems with their leadership and esprit de corps, we would currently be in an election campaign and we would know who, according to the public, are the best people to represent them at this time.

I am convinced that Quebeckers do not agree with the Conservatives' current approach to the economy. It is not at all

consistent with our way of doing things or with our economic culture.

In the past, having suffered some hard blows, Quebec developed all kinds of tools to deal with such economic downturns.

● (1705)

They were put in place and that allowed us to evolve.

In the current pan-Canadian context, with the Conservatives' approach, we have experienced something that I have not seen for a long time: the Quebec Minister of Finance, a federalist, spoke up and said that the federal budget was unacceptable to Quebec. Imagine. The finance minister is not a member of the PQ or of a sovereigntist party. The day after the budget, the finance minister of the Liberal Party of Quebec told the federal government that, in terms of assistance to the manufacturing and forestry sectors, its budget was not satisfactory.

In Quebec, the initial reflex of citizens is to turn to the Government of Quebec. In fact, it is the only parliament that they have complete control over. They exert pressure on the government so that it will put things in place and it has an obligation to listen. The Government of Quebec took action, although it is not perfect.

Imagine the momentum if a similar effort had been made by the federal government. A decision could have been made to transfer significant amounts enabling Quebec to strengthen programs it established, for example putting in place a comprehensive program for older workers. The current program has a retraining component, which is a good thing for them. However, it does not have a training component for those workers who cannot find a new job.

The same can be said for research and development. Regional companies would have benefited had the federal government re-introduced Technology Partnerships Canada. Premier Tech in Rivière-du-Loup, for example, received significant amounts from this federal program on two occasions. We supported that program; we did not condemn it. It led to the creation of new jobs for young people. In my opinion, the economic prosperity in Rivière-du-Loup is due in part to the success of this company.

Technology partnerships Canada may have been abused in some cases. However, they threw the baby out with the bathwater when they decided not to bring the program back. That kind of program would have been very useful considering the current problems in the forestry and manufacturing sectors. Industry Canada could have maintained partnerships. Partnerships are not subsidies. The government and the company each invested money in developing new products, and if a new product worked out, parts of the royalties flowed back to the government. That worked for Premier Tech. The government should be more open to programs like that and allow for a certain number of failures before achieving success.

With respect to this recommendation, after the 2006 election, there was a transition period during which people thought the Conservatives would take a pragmatic approach to assessing programs. Unfortunately, the ideological approach prevailed, and the program was not renewed, except for the aeronautics sector. As a result, we were deprived of an important tool for development.

Business of Supply

Today, the Bloc Québécois supports this motion of non-confidence in the government because of the Conservatives' endless parade of negative answers and their unwillingness to consider certain suggestions.

All one has to do is look at the oil and gas sectors. Take a look. Our society can afford sustainable development. We could have made major investments in renewable energy. Instead, we have to explain to people that the government is giving tax credits to companies to extract oil from the tar sands and create pollution. Moreover, they will be allowed to continue polluting until 2012, because polluters will not be forced to pay the price until then.

That approach is completely unacceptable. That is not the kind of society that Quebecers and Canadians want. People want their government to take changing realities into account; they want their government to do everything it can to encourage sustainable development; and they want a carbon exchange.

The repercussions for the environment are enormous. For years, people thought of environmentalists as people with high standards that were nonetheless economically unfeasible. Now, we know that economy and environment can work together. Economic development can happen within a sustainable development context. To make it happen, people need the right tools.

The carbon exchange is a remarkable tool, because it relies on market rules. It is the same as a stock exchange, with shares and exchanges. It creates a market and a competitive spirit. It spurs the desire to do something concrete, in my riding for example, to introduce environmentally friendly products.

• (1710)

Representatives from a business came to see me in the spring of 2006 to ask if the carbon exchange was going to be implemented, because they had a project. The carbon exchange would have allowed them to develop such a project and its profitability would have been justified by the carbon exchange return. It was not implemented, however, and their project did not proceed. This is true in a number of sectors. Many businesses in North America would have carried out projects and would have created long term jobs.

In a sustainable development context, we are lagging behind Europe, which has taken the lead in this area and is making progress much faster than we are. There is even now an American law that states that petroleum products produced from oil sands will no longer be accepted in the United States in a few years' time. It is in the American Energy Act. They have already realized that this aspect must be taken into account in order to find a solution to ensure that petroleum products produced from oil sands are produced in a way that is acceptable. We did not take any such action.

The Conservative government is no longer a new government. It is a government with two and a half years of experience. It has had the chance to adjust to the proposals that have been made. Some have been made by the Bloc, and there could have been some from the Liberals, the NDP or the Conservatives. Unanimous proposals have been made by various parliamentarians and have been ignored by the Conservatives. We get the impression that the Conservative government put on rose coloured glasses last year and thinks it will get through the economic downturn without having to do what it

takes to help the economy. No one in North America believes that any more.

President Bush, whom we cannot accuse of being left leaning, has taken measures to help his economy. Across Quebec and Canada we have the necessary tools to work together to create and share prosperity. The Conservative government has not done what it takes. If there had been an election, this would have been plain once again. Often the only tool citizens have left to express themselves is democracy.

There is one thing I absolutely do not understand and that is how elected members of this House can say that other members of this House are useless. That shows disrespect for democracy. When a Conservative member tells a Bloc member that he is useless, he is telling all the voters of that riding that the member is useless.

Look at Quebec as a whole, at its economy. We have received the majority of the vote in the past five elections. Take a look at the ridings represented by Bloc members. As far as the Rivière-du-Loup riding is concerned, I am not embarrassed to compare it at any time with any other riding in Quebec. It is a riding that has been represented by a Bloc member for 15 years and by an opposition member in Quebec City. There is full employment in the Rivière-du-Loup area.

The government has to stop blackmailing with power and start taking action. If the federal government continues doing nothing, then we simply must vote in favour of a non-confidence motion. It is all the Conservatives deserve.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply now before the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): 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 five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Call in the members.

• (1740)

[Translation]

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

*Business of Supply**(Division No. 79)***YEAS**

Members

André	Angus
Bachand	Barbot
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Duceppe	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravel
Guimond	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Lussier	Malo
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McDonough
Ménard (Hochelega)	Mulcair
Nash	Paquette
Perron	Picard
Plamondon	Priddy
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	Stoffer
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent	
Wasylcia-Leis— 63	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélanger
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Bonin
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooze
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dryden
Dykstra	Easter
Emerson	Epp
Eyking	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Guamieri	Guergis
Hall Findlay	Hanger
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Holland

Hubbard	Ignatieff
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Keeper	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Khan	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauson
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	Malhi
Maloney	Manning
Mark	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Matthews
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Pearson	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Scott
Sgro	Shiple
Silva	Simard
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
St. Amand	St. Denis
Stanton	Steckle
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Valley
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Wappel	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Wilfert	Williams
Wilson	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Zed— 198

PAIRED

Members

Batters	Bellavance
Bernier	Carrier
Doyle	Faille
Grewal	Guay
Komarnicki	Lessard
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Nadeau	Norlock
Pallister	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	Thi Lac— 20

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HALF-MASTING OF PEACE TOWER FLAG

The House resumed from March 12 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 310.

● (1750)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 80)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	André
Angus	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Barbot	Bélanger
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blais
Bonin	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brison	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Cotler
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dryden	Duceppe
Easter	Eyking
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Gravel	Guarnieri
Guimond	Hall Findlay
Holland	Hubbard
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keeper
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lussier	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloney	Marleau
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Matthews
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Minna
Mulcair	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nash
Neville	Pacetti
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Perron
Picard	Plamondon
Priddy	Proulx

Rae	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Scott	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard	St. Amand
St. Denis	Steckle
Stoffer	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Tonks	Turner
Valley	Vincent
Volpe	Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert	Wilson
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed- — 142

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anderson	Arthur
Baird	Benoit
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Boucher
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunooge
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Comuzzi	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dykstra	Emerson
Epp	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	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)	Khan
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lukiwski
Lunney	Manning
Mark	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Paradis
Petit	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shipley	Skelton
Smith	Solberg
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Williams
Yelich- — 115	

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Members

Batters	Bellavance
Bernier	Carrier
Doyle	Faillie
Grewal	Guay
Komarnicki	Lessard
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Nadeau	Norlock
Pallister	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	Thi Lac — 20

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

It being 5:50 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

KOMAGATA MARU INCIDENT

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should officially apologize to the Indo-Canadian community and to the individuals impacted in the 1914 Komagata Maru incident, in which passengers were prevented from landing in Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, in 1914 a huge injustice occurred in our nation, an injustice that left a huge black mark on our nation's history, an injustice and tragedy that will forever serve as a reminder of the struggles and challenges that immigrants have encountered in their hope for a better future in Canada. The incident, the injustice and the tragedy that I speak of is the incident of the *Komagata Maru*.

On May 23, 1914, the *Komagata Maru*, a passenger ship, arrived in Vancouver at the Burrard Inlet with 376 passengers from India. On board were 340 Sikhs, 12 Hindus and 24 Muslims. Many of them had fought alongside the British in wars and gave their lives for the commonwealth. They were British citizens coming to a commonwealth country, yet upon their arrival they were horrified to learn that they would be denied the opportunity to disembark and enter Canada. The grounds were Canada's immigration laws, exclusionary, discriminatory and racist, passed in the 1900s and designed to select immigrants based on race and country of origin.

Legislation was passed which stated that to be admitted to Canada, immigrants were required to come by continuous journey from their countries of birth and to have at least \$200. Even though the continuous journey regulation did not mention race or nationality, it was indeed an open secret that the regulation was intended to be applied to those coming from India or China.

Hence, Canadian authorities did not permit these passengers on the *Komagata Maru* to leave the boat. For two months these passengers lived in prison like conditions, with little food and water. They lived in conditions of famine, starvation and disease. The Indo-Canadian community at that time, in particular those from the Khalsa Diwan Society, struggled to assist them and fruitlessly negotiate on their behalf in order for them to stay in Canada. Unfortunately, despite their efforts and struggles, at the end of the two months, only 24 passengers were given permission to stay in Canada. The rest were ordered deported.

On July 23, 1914, the Canadian government of the day brought in the cruiser, HMCS *Rainbow*, which aimed its guns at the *Komagata Maru* and ordered for it to be escorted out of Canadian waters. Friends and supporters watched this bitter and horrific injustice as it was the first time that the Canadian navy had used a ship for aggression.

A journey that had begun on April 4, 1914, from India ended on September 29, 1914, when the *Komagata Maru* returned to Calcutta, India. Upon its return, some of the passengers were killed and others arrested.

This tragedy is an injustice and serves to remind us of this dark chapter in our nation's history. Ninety-four years later, this chapter still remains open. Neither the Indo-Canadian community nor those who were impacted or affected have ever received an apology from the government for this mistake of the past.

Many before me have raised this issue, individuals from the Indo-Canadian community, municipal, provincial and federal politicians, like the members for Newton—North Delta, Bramalea—Gore—Malton, people like Sahib Thind of the Professor Mohan Singh Memorial Foundation, Sukhi Badh of Radio Punjab, Mr. Gurbinder Dhaliwal of Radio Sher-e-Punjab, Radio India's Maninder Gill and Gurpreet Singh and Kulwinder from Red FM. However, despite their efforts and persistence, an apology has yet to be received.

Some Canadians might ask why this is important to raise nearly a century later. It is ironic that 90 years later we have another Conservative government that is once again deciding to overhaul our immigration system, which would perhaps provide the minister with discretionary powers to pick and choose who comes to our nation.

• (1755)

We only need to be reminded of the injustices of the past, injustices like the *Komagata Maru* incident, or the time from 1885 to 1923 when there was a head tax for the Chinese, or the period from 1923 to 1945 where strict immigration rules prohibited the Jewish from entering our country.

Those were not proud moments in our nation's history. We must not, as a nation, go back to the politics of exclusion, discrimination or racism. We must move forward as a country.

As a proud Canadian, a proud Sikh and a proud Indo-Canadian, I have seen and heard first-hand how the injustices of the *Komagata Maru* incident has left families around the world, including many in the Indo-Canadian community, with scars and with pain that can never be forgotten.

In 2006 there was a glimmer of hope when the Prime Minister spoke at the Gadri Babiyian da Mela Festival in Vancouver and stated:

I also want you to know that the Government of Canada acknowledges the *Komagata Maru* incident and we will soon undertake consultations with the Indo-Canadian community on how best to recognize this sad moment in our history.

As I stand here today I cannot help but wonder why nearly two years after making this commitment there has been absolutely no progress. Why is it that two years later the community continues to wait?

Private Members' Business

This is an opportunity today for the Prime Minister and the Conservative government to follow their words with action and correct a wrong that occurred during a time when there was another Conservative prime minister.

We, as Canadians and as parliamentarians, cannot play politics with this issue. No apology 94 years after the injustice and 2 years after the government acknowledged the incident is a tragedy in itself.

When we as a nation have done wrong in the past we have always done the right thing and the courageous thing. We have always apologized.

In 1988, a formal apology and acknowledgement of unjust treatment and violation of human rights was given regarding the Japanese Canadian internment. On June 22, 2006, an apology was given to the Chinese for the implementation of the Chinese head tax. Just recently, in November 2007, Parliament passed a motion recognizing that Japan used women as sex slaves during World War II and encouraged the federal government to press the government of Japan to make a formal and sincere apology to all victims referred to as comfort women.

However, I would urge all of my colleagues today, regardless of their political stripes, regardless of their political affiliation, to put partisan politics aside and do the right thing and support this motion.

It is with a great deal of pride that when one looks at Canada we see the rest of the world. Canada is a symbol of hope for so many, a country in which equality, opportunity, acceptance and respect are our hallmarks. We are a nation in which there are over five million visible minorities, all having the chance to succeed and to realize and fulfill their dreams.

Canada is a nation that has been built on the hard work, the vision, the passion and the efforts of immigrants. We are a nation in which, despite events like the Chinese head tax and the *Komagata Maru*, Canadians from the Sikh community, the Indian community, have been able to succeed, to achieve, to prosper and to contribute to the building of a better and brighter future for our nation.

It is so imperative that we be able to reflect and learn from our mistakes. We must never forget as Canadians where we come from, the sacrifices that have been made by those who have come before us and the struggles and challenges that we have faced as a nation to truly become the symbol of hope, the envy of the rest of the world.

We must move forward as Canadians and as a nation. We must turn the page on this dark chapter in our nation's history. We must begin that process with three simple words: We are sorry.

● (1800)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the member for Brampton—Springdale. At what point do we stop apologizing? At what point do we set the limit for apologies that the Government of Canada would make to various groups, to Canadians, for past injustices?

The incident she raises was truly a tragedy. It was a most unfortunate incident. In the decades that have passed since that tragic incident, the country has become more enlightened and has progressed and has a very different view of what it means to be a citizen of this great country.

However, at what point do we, as a country, establish a limit for these apologies? Many injustices have been done to immigrants of various ethnic backgrounds in decades and centuries past, whether they were Irish, Scottish or Jewish immigrants. At what point do we set those limits?

Until recent decades, the University of Toronto, for example, had quotas for certain minorities to restrict their entry into professional schools. At what point do we say that, yes, those were injustices but we will move on, we will look to the future and we will deal with injustices in our time?

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Mr. Speaker, there have been many injustices that have occurred in the past. We only need to take a stroll down memory lane to realize that from 1885 until 1923 there was a head tax on the Chinese. The Chinese people were not even given the right to vote federally until 1947. If we take a look at the Italian community, the German community and the Jewish community, they have all been impacted by injustices that have occurred. Programs have been set up to provide the opportunity for students, for future generations and for youth to be educated on the struggles and the challenges that have been faced in the past.

We have done the right thing, as parliamentarians, as a government previously, to apologize to the Chinese and the Japanese community. It is unfortunate that in this particular situation, for this grave injustice and dark chapter in our history, that the Indo-Canadian community has received no apology.

I do not think that we as parliamentarians and elected officials representing our constituents should be pitting one ethnic community against another. That is not the right approach. However, when an injustice as grave as this one has occurred, it is an opportunity for all of us to do the right thing, to provide that leadership and issue an apology for a grave injustice that was done in the past.

● (1805)

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very intently to the arguments put forward by the hon. member on the opposition side. I would like to ask the member why it took a Conservative government to apologize to the Japanese Canadians. Why, over 13 years of Liberal government, was nothing done when the Chinese were asking for acknowledge and an apology? Why did it take this Conservative government to compensate and recognize the Chinese Canadians? Why, if the *Komagata Maru* victims are asking for recognition, which went back over 20 years, did the Liberals, when they were in power for years, not act on this?

This is just another demonstration by the members opposite that, instead of trying to do the right thing on principle, they are now asking for something that they had the power to do when they were in power. They do not believe they should act on principle. They only want power so they only say things at times when they think they will be re-elected to power rather than on principle.

Could the member tell me why, in all the many years that her government had the ability to do what she is asking, did it not do what she is asking this government to do?

Private Members' Business

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Mr. Speaker, need I remind the member that it was the Conservative government that came in and cancelled \$55 million of the acknowledged commemorate and educational program for many of these injustices that have been done. This is an issue on which we cannot have partisan politics. It is an issue where all parliamentarians should come together and do the right thing and issue an apology.

I must remind the hon. member that in 2006 the Prime Minister stood at an event with the Indo-Canadian community in Vancouver and stated that he would try to move forward on a recognition. It has been two years later and this motion is an opportunity for the Prime Minister to back up his words with action, instead of empty rhetoric, to do the right thing and to support this motion because Canadians are counting on the Conservatives to do that.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to the government's position on Motion No. 469, which reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should officially apologize to the Indo-Canadian community and to the individuals impacted in the 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident, in which passengers were prevented from landing in Canada.

I would like to start by acknowledging the member for Brampton—Springdale and to thank her for bringing this important incident to the attention of the House.

I do not think anyone here today is proud of the treatment that the 354 passengers of the *Komagata Maru*, who were not allowed to land, received from the Government of Canada. I know that I am not.

The passengers on board the ship were not allowed to land in Canada because they had not come to Canada by a continuous journey which was required under the immigration regulations that were in place at the time. They were not allowed to land because cabinet had decreed that immigrants from Asia were required to have a minimum of \$200 on arrival. This was no small sum in 1914. By today's standards, I think most people would agree that this was discriminatory.

Even though the immigration regulations were found by the courts to be valid at the time, most observers today would agree that they do not reflect current Canadian values. How could anyone on the ship not feel that they were being treated as second class citizens of the British Empire?

The decision to turn the *Komagata Maru* away from Canada had even more dire consequences when the ship arrived back in India. Attempts by British officials to transport the passengers back to the Punjab provoked a riot in which 20 of the passengers were killed.

This was a bleak moment for Canada. It is one of the most notorious incidents in the sad chapter of exclusion laws in Canadian history.

At the time of the *Komagata Maru* incident there were only a few thousand immigrants from India in Canada. Most of them arrived late in the 19th century and they settled in the Vancouver area. Despite the discrimination they experienced on an almost daily basis, they were determined to make a home of their new country and they persevered to build better lives for themselves and for their children.

Today, Canada's Indo-Canadian community has grown to about three-quarters of a million people. They have been instrumental in building a vibrant economy and society not only in British Columbia but indeed right across Canada. They have risen to prominent positions in every facet of our society. They have become an important part of the multicultural mosaic that we are so proud of here in Canada today.

The Prime Minister acknowledged the lasting contribution that Indo-Canadians have made to our prosperity and cultural diversity in August 2006. I would like to read a brief excerpt from a speech the Prime Minister made at the Gadri Babiyian da Mela Festival in Surrey. He said, "Simply put, you're helping to build a stronger Canada that benefits all of us. When you succeed, Canada succeeds, and it's no secret that the Indo-Canadian community has amassed an enviable record of success, one which stems from the values that underlie this community: hard work, a dedication to the pursuit of excellence and a commitment to family, community and country".

In that speech, the Prime Minister acknowledged the *Komagata Maru* incident and announced that the government would consult with the Indo-Canadian community on the best way to recognize this sad moment in Canadian history.

Our government has shown leadership on this issue. A short time after the Prime Minister's speech in Surrey, the Minister of Canadian Heritage asked her parliamentary secretary, the member for Kootenay—Columbia, to lead consultations on the tragic *Komagata Maru* incident. We will hear about his consultations later in this debate.

Consultations are one thing but without action to follow them up they do not amount to much. That is why my government has established two new programs: the community historical recognition program and the national historical recognition program.

The community historical recognition program is a grants and contributions program. It will provide funding for community based projects that will allow ethnocultural communities affected by wartime measures and immigration restrictions that were applied in Canada to promote awareness of their experiences and to have them recognized. The program will also highlight the contributions these communities have made to Canadian society.

The second program, the national historical recognition program, is designed to fund federal initiatives that will inform Canadians, particularly youth, about historical incidents or episodes related to wartime measures and immigration practices.

● (1810)

This program will also focus on the contributions made by the affected communities to the building of Canada. We will give stakeholders and partners a voice in how federal initiatives are developed under the national historical recognition program.

To ensure that the community historical recognition program and the national historical recognition program achieve their goals, we will make an investment of \$34 million over four years in these programs.

Recognizing historical experiences and raising awareness through these initiatives will help to strengthen the sense of inclusion of all communities in Canada and will help ensure that similar practices do not recur. It will help to turn the page on the *Komagata Maru* incident.

Our government has recognized the *Komagata Maru* incident at the highest level. We have conducted consultations with the Indo Canadian community on the best way to respond to this tragic episode in our history. We have established programs to recognize past injustices and to educate Canadians, particularly those who are too young to remember the wrongs committed by those in authority dozens of years ago, and in this case, decades ago.

Our government has shown true leadership on the file. We will continue to work with the Indo Canadian community to ensure that this incident is not forgotten and that incidents like this never occur again in Canada.

• (1815)

[Translation]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of motion M-469 from the member for Brampton—Springdale. This motion calls on the government to officially apologize to the Indo-Canadian community and to the individuals impacted in the 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident.

As we all know, in 1908, Canada passed a law that seriously restricted immigration from certain parts of the world. The Canadian government at the time ordered that immigrants who did not come to Canada by continuous journey—meaning that they did not come directly to Canada from their country of origin—were prohibited from immigrating to Canada. At the time, the law also prohibited Asian immigrants from entering Canada unless they were carrying at least \$200. The government took it upon itself to limit immigration from oriental countries. These terrible conditions were what led to the *Komagata Maru* incident, a sad example of the discrimination against Asian immigrants at that time.

In May 1914, the passenger ship *Komagata Maru* arrived in Canadian waters off British Columbia. It was carrying about 376 migrants of Indian origin. Some were Sikh, some Hindu, some Muslim. The ship had not come directly from Hong Kong to Canada, but had stopped in Shanghai and Yokohama. Because it had not made a continuous journey, it violated the Immigration Act at the time, that famous edict by Canada. In fact, at the time, no shipping company made a direct journey, and that is what is so terrible.

Because 22 passengers on board the *Komagata Maru* were considered Canadian residents, they were allowed to land, but the remaining passengers were forced to stay on the ship for two months.

The Conservative government at the time cited legal reasons for prohibiting the remaining passengers on the *Komagata Maru* from entering Canada: they had not come directly from India by a continuous journey; they did not have the minimum of \$200 required; they were subject to a recent immigration regulation that prohibited workers from entering at Pacific ports of entry.

Private Members' Business

But the government at the time did not deport them from Canada. A few weeks later, five judges of the Court of Appeal of British Columbia ruled unanimously that the immigration regulations were legal and valid and ordered the deportation that had been previously decreed. The *Komagata Maru* was escorted into international waters by a Canadian war ship. Near Calcutta, these people were told that they were going to be taken to the Punjab. The passengers did not want to go to the Punjab, and a riot ensued. Of the 29 people who were injured, 20 died.

In Canada, there are 750,000 people of Indian origin, including more than 34,000 in Quebec, the vast majority of whom—94%—live in the Montreal area. This event is important to the Canada's Indian community. Indo-Canadians believe that by making an official apology, Canada would right a historic wrong and would recognize this community's important contribution to Canada and Quebec. An official apology is the least Canada could do, and it would also be a way of saying that such incidents must never be allowed to happen again.

In August 2006, the Prime Minister gave a speech in which he confirmed that the Government of Canada acknowledged the *Komagata Maru* incident and programs were put in place enabling the Indian community to remember what happened and also to recognize its contribution to society.

• (1820)

Although the Prime Minister acknowledged the incident and programs were put in place, no official apology has been offered to members of the Indian community in Canada. It is not enough to offer symbolic apologies. This government is very good at making symbolic gestures but not at taking action.

We believe that the government could also consider other, more concrete means of acknowledging this incident. For example, it could finance a monument commemorating the incident. It could also establish a museum or historical display pertaining to the incident.

An apology must be given. The Bloc Québécois acknowledges what happened and will vote in favour of Motion M-469. There have been other incidents of this kind, and they must not be ignored. I will give two examples.

In 1918, under a Conservative government, Canadian soldiers opened fire on a crowd protesting conscription. Four people were killed and others injured. Furthermore, the people who were fired upon and died were innocent, and were not participating at all in the riot. We believe that the government has an obligation to provide appropriate compensation to the families of the victims. This has never been done.

Another example is the residential schools issue. Nearly 150,000 aboriginals went through hell in the residential schools. Some 87,000 of them are still alive. In 2006, the Bloc Québécois asked the Prime Minister to act on behalf of the Government of Canada and take the opportunity presented by the implementation of the residential schools agreement to offer a long-awaited apology to the victims. The government never did apologize.

Private Members' Business

In the spring of 2007, the House apologized to residential school survivors for the trauma they experienced because of policies to assimilate first nations, Inuit and Métis children. As a result of those policies, aboriginal culture, heritage and languages were lost, and the victims were left to deal with the tragic after-effects of the sexual, physical and emotional abuse they were subjected to in the residential schools.

Last year, on May 1, the House of Commons agreed to apologize to Canadian aboriginals for what happened to them in residential schools in the 20th century. To this day, the Prime Minister of Canada has refused to offer an official apology to the victims and their families who were abused in residential schools in Canada.

I see that my time is nearly up, so I just want to tell the hon. member that we support her motion. It is a noble and worthy motion. Official recognition of what happened does not cost much.

During the vote this afternoon, I could not believe that anyone would refuse to fly the flag at half-staff for soldiers who go to war. Folks have no problem going to Valcartier to tell the soldiers that they are a great bunch of people, and that it is a shame they have to go and fight, but those same folks do not want to lower the flag for them, for our Quebeckers. That is very upsetting.

In short, we are delighted that the member, the members of the Bloc Québécois, and other members of Parliament are willing to recognize the flagrant injustice suffered by the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*.

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Motion No. 469 and to inform the member for Brampton—Springdale that the entire NDP caucus will also be supporting this important motion.

The dark shadow of racism can be found in the story of the *Komagata Maru*, and one of the questions that was asked earlier was how often we should apologize. I will remind people here that when we deny or forget our past, we are bound to repeat it and that is one of my concerns.

It was originally under the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1909 that the concept of the continuous journey was introduced into Canadian immigration, and that is when the dark shadow of racism started creeping across the land.

The story we have been hearing is about this Japanese steamer that sailed from Hong Kong to Shanghai to Yokohama, Japan and then to Vancouver in 1914, carrying 376 passengers mostly from Punjab, India. Following that lengthy journey they were turned away and not allowed to enter Canada. This act of racism occurred under the Conservative government of Sir Robert Borden.

This was one of the most notorious incidents in the history of the early 20th century of the exclusion laws in Canada and the United States that were designed to keep out people of Asian origin.

Sadly, it was not the last of Canada's exclusionary practices. Members will recall the ship of the damned, the Jewish people who came to the shores of Canada, only to be turned away by a member of the government who said that one Jew was one Jew too many in this country.

In 1958 the Conservatives, under John Diefenbaker, moved to block the flow of Italian Canadians coming to Canada. The shadow of racism was still alive.

Of course today, buried in the latest budget bill, Bill C-50, the Conservative government is moving to control immigration. It will control not only who gets into Canada but more importantly who does not get in, who is excluded in this immigration package that is coming forth.

However, back to the story of this ship. Gurdit Singh, a well to do fisherman in Singapore, decided he wanted to force Canada to eliminate its exclusionary practices and exclusion law. He felt that by circumventing these laws, by hiring a boat to sail from Calcutta to Vancouver, he could help his compatriots whose journeys to Canada had been blocked.

During the first two decades of the 20th century, Canada passed several bills limiting the civil rights of Indians, including the right to vote, hold public office, serve on juries, or practice as pharmacists, lawyers or accountants.

However, because India, like Canada, was part of the British Empire, Canadian authorities did not pass the exclusion laws directly targeting those of Indian origin. The British authorities saw the Indian resentment when the white Australian policy was put into place in 1905. When Canada started to make its plans, the warnings came from London to take care and to understand the ramifications of building a nationalist fervour in India, so we acceded to what the British crown wanted at that time.

Clearly, Canadian immigration authorities had devised a devious way to indirectly halt Indian immigration to this country. This had been built around the continuous journey provisions that we heard about today. To be admitted into Canada, immigrants had to come by a continuous journey from their country of birth and enter with at least \$200.

They knew that the ships coming from India would be stopping in Japan. That would not be a continuous journey, thus the ugly shadow of racism was hidden within the context of that continuous journey regulation. Because it did not mention race or nationality, to some it could even be argued it was fair because it applied to all immigrants.

This was certainly one of the many shadows of racism that passed over Canada over the last 100 years. It was very clear to all that the regulation was intended to apply only to Indians. At the time, the Canadian Pacific did run a very lucrative shipping line between Vancouver and Calcutta.

The Canadian government persuaded the company to stop this service. It then became impossible to come to Canada by a continuous journey. It was a mission accomplished. This of course was racist when it was used to enforce a white, Canada-only policy.

Private Members' Business

• (1825)

In chartering the *Komagata Maru*, Mr. Singh's goal was to challenge the continuous journey regulation. He believed that it would open the door for immigration from India to Canada.

Hong Kong became the point of departure. The ship was scheduled to leave in March, but Mr. Singh was arrested for selling tickets for an illegal voyage. He was later released on bail and given permission by the government of Hong Kong to set sail.

Many passengers joined the ship in Shanghai on April 8 and the ship arrived in Yokohama on April 14. It left Yokohama on May 3 with its full complement of 376 passengers and arrived in Vancouver on May 23 after several months at sea. This is a quote from the time:

This ship belongs to the whole of India, this is a symbol of the honour of India and if this was detained, there would be mutiny in the armies.

That was what one of the passengers told one of the British officers who greeted them in Vancouver.

Balwant Singh, the head priest of the Gurdwara in Vancouver, met the ship and became one of three delegates sent to London and India to represent the case of the Indians in Canada.

When the ship arrived in Canadian waters, it had not been allowed to dock. The Conservative premier of British Columbia, Richard McBride, gave a categorical statement that the passengers would not be allowed to disembark.

A shore committee was formed and protest meetings were held in Canada and the United States. At one, held in the Dominion Hall in Vancouver, it was resolved that if the passengers were not allowed to get off, Indo-Canadians would follow them back to India. The implications would be that there would be a rebellion if that were to occur.

The shore committee raised over \$22,000. One can imagine that amount of money in that era as an installment for chartering such a ship. It also launched a test case to test the legality in the name of Munshi Singh, one of the passengers.

On July 7, the full bench of the Supreme Court of Canada gave a unanimous judgment, and we have heard that in the House from the Conservative speaker earlier, that under the new orders in council it had no authority to interfere with the decisions of the department of immigration and colonization.

The Japanese captain then was relieved of his duty by the angry passengers, but the Canadian government ordered a tug, the *Sea Lion*, to push the ship out to sea. On July 19, the angry passengers fought back with the only weapons they had. They were not armed. The quote from the *The Sun* in Vancouver read:

Howling masses of Hindus showered policemen with lumps of coal and bricks...it was like standing underneath a coal chute.

The government also mobilized the HMCS *Rainbow*, a former Royal Navy ship under the command of Commander Hose, with troops from the Royal Irish Fusiliers, 72nd Highlanders. In the end, only 24 passengers were admitted to Canada since the ship had violated the exclusion laws and the remaining passengers did not have the required \$200 funds. As we know, that was an exorbitant amount of money in that day.

The ship turned around and departed for Asia. When it arrived in Asia, in Calcutta, on September 26, it was met by a British gunboat and as we heard before, it was diverted to Budge Budge, where the British intended to put the group on a train to Punjab. The passengers did not wish to go and when they proceeded to explain that, a riot broke out, and some 20 people were killed.

Today, the lessons from this dark period of racism seem to be lost on the current government. Its move to control immigration, as embedded in Bill C-50, I feel, has the same hidden exclusion as at the turn of the century.

We hear the Liberals assail this bill as being discriminatory and having the hidden agenda of exclusion, but will they defeat it? We hear the rhetoric. We will wait to see the vote and once and for all who stands up for new Canadians and their families in this country.

As for Motion No. 469, members of my party and I are proud to stand in support of this motion, as we will stand and oppose Bill C-50 when it comes before us.

• (1830)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Brampton—Springdale for proposing this motion which is long overdue.

I have listened very carefully to my colleagues on the Conservative benches and also the NDP and Bloc. The consensus seems to be that the government is not willing to support the motion.

As other speakers have mentioned and told the story about this incident, it is a black mark in Canadian history. When I look at the early 1900s, Canadian immigration officials began making provisions to block immigration from United India, which is now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, three different countries. They were advised by London to be cautious in their approach because both Canada and India were part of the British Empire and rights of all subjects of the Empire needed to be respected.

Canadian officials nevertheless relied on immigration regulations that had the effect of excluding many prospective Indian immigrants. To be admitted to Canada immigrants were required to come by a continuous journey from their country of birth and each enter with at least \$200 cash.

The continuous journey regulation did not mention race or nationality and on the surface seemed fair and applicable to all immigrants. However, it was an open secret that the regulation was intended to be applied primarily to the people from British India.

Other members have mentioned the history. I am not going to go into the history, but I will mention that the Conservative Prime Minister was in Surrey, in my riding on August 6, 2006, where he made a commitment. I will quote what the Prime Minister said at that time:

—the government of Canada acknowledges the *Komagata Maru* incident and we will soon undertake consultations with the Indo-Canadian community on how best to recognize this sad moment in our history.

Private Members' Business

In fact, it has been a long two years during which the government has done nothing. Now I see that it is going to oppose the motion. I personally feel that we are hurting the work done by many members of the House, and also many members from the community as mentioned by the member for Brampton—Springdale, people from Mohan Singh Memorial Foundation, people like Sahib Thind and his associates who have worked on this for 10 continuous years.

In fact, they prepared a petition asking for an apology that was filed in the House by one of the Conservative members. All they are looking for is a simple apology from the House. They are not looking for any compensation.

It is the right thing for the government to apologize at this point in time and make all Canadians proud that we care about all communities and that we treat every community equally.

When I look at the ACE agreement that the Liberals introduced in 2005, it was to acknowledge, commemorate and educate about the past injustices done to all communities in one agreement. We cannot cherry pick between one community or the other.

When the current government came in, it cancelled all the funds the Liberals had put in place. The record shows that.

With the immigration bill, Bill C-50, that is what it is doing as well. It is hiding those sweeping immigration changes. The government is trying to go around this and not come up clean.

● (1835)

I would request all members of the House to support the motion of the member for Brampton—Springdale and vote in favour of its passage.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary for Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion of the hon. member for Brampton—Springdale reads:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should officially apologize to the Indo-Canadian community and to the individuals impacted in the 1914 Komagata Maru incident, in which passengers were prevented from landing in Canada.

The motion that she has presented reflects our 2008 societal values as a nation. Canada is a multicultural nation that is proud to have the privilege of benefiting from diverse backgrounds and heritages. We value the many cultures that make up the fabric of our society.

Today's motion also serves as a comment on the societal values of 1908. That is exactly one hundred years ago. Then, as now, MPs in government reflected the values of their time in words and in their actions. It is important to look back a hundred years to understand how this incident ever came about.

In 1908, during the tenure of prime minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier, a government regulation amended Canada's Immigration Act to include a continuous journey clause. The clause prohibited immigrants from India and Asia from landing in Canada if they did not come by a continuous journey from India. This was intentional, because it was well known that there was no way for a person travelling from India to Canada to make a continuous journey, but it was reflective of Canadian society's views as expressed by MPs in 1908.

Liberal prime minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier said on March 24, 1908:

The situation with regard to the Hindus at the present time can be easily explained. The regulations of the Department of the Interior provide that all undesirables, idiots, insane or incapables for instance, can be and ought to be excluded. But it was found that certain parties were coming in not from the country of their origin but from other countries, and therefore they could not be sent back to the country of their origin.

Laurier said:

Therefore, the Minister of the Interior, in order to have the machinery under his hand to send back to the country of origin any man who did not come up to our regulations, physically, mentally or otherwise, passed a regulation whereby no one would be admitted unless he came through a ticket from the country of his origin.

It was interesting that Conservative Robert Borden asked:

Does it make any difference how long the immigrant has been in the country from which he comes? For instance, if a German has resided for three or four years in England before coming to Canada, would you refuse him admission on that account?

Laurier answered:

This question has not been looked into and I think it not likely to arise. If a German were coming from Great Britain after being there some years, I do not know what we should do as the situation has never arisen; but we are looking to what actually has arisen. Steamship companies, in their anxiety to bring people here, might take them all over the globe, and we should not be able to send the undesirables to their countries of their nationalities. Therefore, to make sure we pass regulations whereby no one would be permitted to land unless he came from the country of his origin, the Hindus who have been deported or excluded come under that regulation. The regulation is not directed against the Hindus or any other nationality, but it is a regulation that applies to all nationalities and was deemed essential in order to control the character of immigrants who were admitted to this country.

It was not only the prime minister. Liberal Mr. MacPherson on April 8, 1908 also said:

I think the object of the amendment brought in by the minister is quite plain.

Mr. Sam Hughes, identified as a liberal Conservative, said:

To exclude Hindus, that is all.

Mr. MacPherson of the Liberals said:

Yes, to exclude Hindus and all kinds of Asiatics, and all kinds of undesirable people.

In 1914 the *Komagata Maru* incident occurred. On May 23, 1914, 376 east Indians, 22 of whom were returning Canadian residents, arrived in Vancouver harbour on board the Japanese steamer, the *Komagata Maru*. The steamer met with a very hostile reception. For weeks the vessel lay in harbour, its human cargo deprived of food and water by Canadian authorities who thought to weaken their resolve.

Finally, on June 20, 1914, in the face of impending starvation, a passengers committee agreed to the Canadian government's demand that a test case go before an immigration board of inquiry.

A week later, the case of Munshi Singh, a young Sikh farmer, was heard, and he was ruled inadmissible on the grounds that he had violated three orders in council, in particular the continuous journey regulation.

● (1840)

When the B.C. Court of Appeal upheld the decision, the way was paved for the passengers to be deported. This happened exactly two months after the arrival of the doomed ship in the Vancouver harbour.

Private Members' Business

With the local citizenry cheering on the docks, a Canadian gunship escorted the *Komagata Maru* to international waters. Unfortunately, upon their return to India, 20 passengers were killed by British soldiers after being shot during a riot.

The only thing that changed from the time that Laurier brought in this act in 1908 and 1914 was the increased tension in Europe brought on by an arms race among major powers that exhibited a challenge to the British Empire. In 1914 some Canadians felt that that added incidental justification for the continuation of the continuous journey clause.

Laurier, having been prime minister in 1908 when the clause came into being, felt compelled to say something again in 1914. His remarks were, "The question" of why other British subjects also do not want the people of the *Komagata Maru* to immigrate to their counties "is not altogether a racial one: the basis of the objection is not wholly antipathy to the yellow races".

Laurier said, "When members of the Asiatic races go to South Africa, to the Straits Settlements, to British Columbia, to California, to Australia, or anywhere, the moment they come into contact with white labour and white working men, there is conflict. The reason is altogether an economic one. These men of Asiatic races have been accustomed for ages to a standard of civilization entirely different from ours. They live more cheaply than we do; they accept a lower rate of wage. That is the commencement of trouble. So long as this is so, you will have the same trouble wherever Asiatics come into contact with men of the Caucasian race".

What I find really astounding is that this was the former prime minister of Canada in this chamber using these words. He went on to say, "These men have been taught by a certain school of politics that they are the equals of British subjects; unfortunately, they are brought face to face with the hard facts only when it is too late".

Laurier said, "In my humble judgment, while the Government will do well to keep them out, the best method is to resort, not to law, but, if possible, to diplomacy. Let arrangements be made with the Government of India whereby they will do as the Japanese Government have done: try to keep their own people home. They may say: The white people come to our country; why should not the people of our country go to yours? That is logical, but, unfortunately, this is a matter in which such logic will not count; and we shall have trouble until the remedy which I venture humbly to submit is applied by this Government".

Thankfully, our society has evolved, but it has taken a long time. Although Canadian values have evolved, we note that during the second world war our nation faced a similar historic failure. On May 13, 1939, the S.S. *St. Louis* departed from Hamburg, Germany with 937 Jewish refugees aboard.

Canada again faced a dark moment in its history when, a month later, the Liberal prime minister, Mackenzie King, stated he was "emphatically opposed to the admission of the *St. Louis* passengers".

Unbelievably, previous to that, the prime minister of Canada had stated, "The admission of refugees perhaps posed a greater menace to Canada in 1938 than did Hitler". This is really quite amazing stuff.

I do not think I have to take any lessons from the Liberals on this issue. I am proud to say that successive Conservative governments have boldly addressed historic wrongs of our great nation.

On September 22, 1988, prime minister Brian Mulroney formally announced the Japanese redress to right the wrongs committed against Japanese Canadians during World War II.

On June 22, 2006, our current Prime Minister formally announced the Chinese head tax redress with *ex gratia* symbolic payments of \$20,000.

On the specific issue of the *Komagata Maru* incident, our Prime Minister stated in his speech in August 2006:

We haven't always lived up to our own highest ideals. The events of 1914 serve as a particularly stark example of this.

Our government is working very diligently at this point on community and national historic recognition programs. We are going to be bringing them forward very quickly.

Let me say again, while the Liberals talk, the Conservatives take action.

• (1845)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to get up this evening and speak to Motion No. 469.

I spent this past weekend with the Indo-Canadian community in my city of Saskatoon celebrating their annual vegetarian dinner. They always remind me how grateful they are for all the things the Conservatives have done for their community, especially the inquiry into the Air-India disaster. They never forget that we did that for them. The community lost some lives in that air disaster and they remind me how appreciative they are for the inquiry. Besides the very good food, I really enjoyed being among them because they are wonderful contributors to our community as a whole.

As the House has heard already, Canada has the reputation of being one of the world's most inclusive and diverse societies. However, our history includes dark moments. Actions related to immigration restrictions and wartime measures, which although legal at the time, are inconsistent with the values that Canadians hold today.

The House has also heard that our Prime Minister publicly stated that the Government of Canada acknowledges the *Komagata Maru* incident. In his acknowledgement, he committed to hold consultations with the Indo-Canadian community on how best to recognize this sad moment in our history.

To that end, the Minister of Canadian Heritage asked the Parliamentary Secretary for Canadian Heritage to consult with representatives of the Indo-Canadian community about the historical experiences related to the 1914 incident. After receiving that mandate in November 2006, my hon. colleague gladly undertook that process.

Adjournment Proceedings

Given the great diversity of religious belief and national origins within the Indo-Canadian community, it was considered very important to provide an opportunity for members of the community to hear each other's views on historical recognition. This was done to help build consensus in the community.

I would like to take a few minutes to describe for the House the consultations and the outcomes of these pan-Canadian meetings.

In total, 41 meetings were held with community leaders and organizations representing a broad cross-section of the Indo-Canadian community, including professionals, community and business leaders, journalists and academics. My hon. colleague even heard from some of the descendants of the passengers of the *Komagata Maru*.

There was also representation from various religious affiliations and from different segments of the Indo-Canadian community. Given the linguistic diversity of the Indo-Canadian community, interpretation was offered in English, French, Punjabi, Hindu and Urdu at our public meetings.

Written submissions were also accepted. Indo-Canadian representatives were invited from other parts of the country. Community leaders from Manitoba and Nova Scotia participated in Toronto. A written brief from an Indo-Canadian community leader from Quebec was also submitted.

In Vancouver, about 180 members of the community attended the meeting, almost one-third of whom spoke. In Toronto, nearly 150 people attended the town hall with 37 individuals rising to the microphones to make statements.

There was a wide range of suggestions for projects to recognize the *Komagata Maru* incident, the continuous journey regulation, and the contributions of the Indo-Canadian community.

The community was nearly united in calling for the establishment of a memorial or a monument to commemorate the incident.

There was also a high degree of—

• (1850)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It is with regret that I interrupt the hon. member but the time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

When Motion No. 469 returns for debate in the House, there will be six minutes left to the hon. parliamentary secretary to make her comments.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[Translation]

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY INDUSTRIES

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 4, I stood in this House and asked the Minister of Finance about the need for an emergency plan to help the manufacturing and forestry industries. I reminded him about the proposals we had made on November 28 for a comprehensive plan to help our industry, our economy and our workers face the economic slowdown that was already being felt in the United States, and that we were already feeling in Quebec and Ontario in the manufacturing and forestry industries.

Since then, things have unfortunately gotten worse. A few minutes ago, Mr. Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the American Federal Reserve, the equivalent of the Bank of Canada, said that the United States is in a recession. As well, today the International Monetary Fund announced its forecast of 0.5% growth between now and 2010 in the United States. Given that we know that the American market represents 85% of Quebec's exports, it is obvious that domestic consumption, the power of domestic purchasing within Quebec and in Canada, will be insufficient in surmounting this crisis, unless the government goes ahead with an action plan.

Again this week, this House passed a motion that included a complete action plan proposed by the Bloc Québécois. That sent a message to the government. At the same time, on March 31, \$10 billion in surplus went to pay down the debt. The Bloc wanted to see \$3 billion go to the debt, while using \$7 billion in a trust in order to diversify our regional economies and address the crisis. Moving forward with an action plan to support the economy was a recommendation made by the International Monetary Fund.

The Conservatives' laissez-faire ideology and their belief that the market will take care of the matter do nothing to meet the needs of our economy at this time. I said so earlier this afternoon during the debate on the NDP non-confidence motion, which the Bloc supported because we believe that this government should be defeated based on its economic approach and lack of economic policy. The government's ideological approach is inconsistent with our current reality. It is the same approach taken by the Republicans in the United States on the verge of the great depression in the 1930s. Today, we are being told that the credit crisis facing U.S. banks is at least as bad as the crisis of the 1930s.

When will the Conservative government go ahead and come up with an action plan funded out of its extensive financial resources? We know that the federal government takes in far more money than it needs to fund its regular activities. The provinces lack money. The federal government must have a strategy for the forestry and manufacturing sectors and must not be afraid to invest.

The minister said that this is not the time to overspend. We are not asking him to overspend; we are asking him to spend enough to help the economy. When the government reduces the GST, it may be helping the Chinese economy more than our own. It should have put in place a fiscal framework to help our manufacturing companies get ahead.

Will the government decide to do something and take real action that reflects today's reality and not the economic growth we were experiencing three years ago?

• (1855)

[English]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight on behalf of the Minister of Finance.

The Bloc member believes the government has failed to support the manufacturing and forestry sectors. Once again, he is wrong. Through the "Advantage Canada" plan, the government has delivered important benefits for the manufacturing sector by helping it better invest and better compete.

For example, we are providing over \$9 billion in tax relief by 2012-13 through a number of measures, including: broad based tax reductions; a temporary accelerated writeoff for investments in machinery and equipment used in manufacturing or processing; improvements in the availability and accessibility of the financial support for research and development to small and medium sized businesses by increasing the expenditure limit for the enhanced scientific research and experimental development investment tax credit; extending the enhanced scientific research and experimental development investment tax credit to medium sized companies by phasing out access to the enhanced benefits over increased taxable capital and taxable income ranges; and \$100 million over two years to support strategic, large scale research and development projects in the automotive sector in developing innovation and greener and more fuel efficient vehicles.

I would also like to discuss how this government is helping Canadians and the communities affected by the slowing global economy.

To help vulnerable communities and laid off workers, the Prime Minister announced in January up to \$1 billion for the community development trust to support communities and workers experiencing hardship. This support is being allocated by providing each province with \$10 million and each territory with \$3 million, with the balance being provided on an equal per capita basis.

Funds provided in the community development trust can be used by the provinces to invest in job training and skills development to meet identified local or regional gaps. The trust will also support the development of community transition plans, economic development, or infrastructure initiatives that support the diversification of local communities.

February's budget built on funding provided by the community development trust by providing an additional \$90 million to extend to 2012 the targeted initiative for older workers to help older workers stay in the workforce.

We provided \$10 million over two years to Natural Resources Canada to promote Canada's forestry sector in international markets as a model of environmental innovation and sustainability.

We are allocating \$72 million over two years to farm programs and to improve access to \$3.3 billion in potential cash advances to Canadian farmers.

Adjournment Proceedings

The government recognizes that the provinces and the territories are well placed to identify the unique difficulties facing these communities across Canada.

Since 2006, this government has provided over \$9 billion in support for the manufacturing and forestry industries.

This government is taking decisive action to support Canadians in the labour market. We have invested this \$1 billion in the community development trust to bolster the provincial and territorial efforts to build stronger communities and support workers hurt by international economic volatility.

We completed labour market agreements with British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick to provide training opportunities to those who do not qualify for employment insurance.

In budget 2008, we extended support for older workers through 2012 by providing \$90 million in new funds for the targeted initiative for older workers.

• (1900)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that these arguments are all falling flat. Things are not working. The government's current policies have resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing sector in Quebec and Ontario. Over the past few years, the most stable companies have held up, but now they too are disappearing.

In Beauce, Maax will be closing its doors despite the fact that the people of Beauce are known to be first-rate entrepreneurs with good business acumen. They are being forced to close their doors because of a serious problem: low sales in the United States. The way to deal with this problem is to invest in research and development with companies that are not necessarily making a profit.

These companies do not need broad-based tax cuts like the ones that will benefit the oil companies and big businesses. They need tax credits. When will the government understand that and take action? Right now, thousands of people, especially older workers, are suffering because the government is failing to act.

[English]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, this government has been concerned about the unemployed in vulnerable communities. That is why we have provided the \$160 million investment in the targeted initiative for older workers, the \$1 billion for the community development trust, and the billions annually in other supports, including the expanded EI benefits and job retraining programs.

Adjournment Proceedings

We believe this government is on the right road. We have a plan to create the best educated, most skilled and most flexible workforce in the world. We believe that higher learning is critical to Canada's international competitiveness. Nationwide over the next 10 years, approximately two-thirds of the new jobs will be in occupations that will require some form of post-secondary education.

We are investing. We are focused on developing, retraining and attracting highly skilled and innovative workers to support our communities. As noted in the 2008 budget, we are working to make sure that all Canadians who want to work will be able to get the training they need to get a good job—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It is with regret that I must interrupt the hon. member, but now the floor belongs to the hon. chief opposition whip.

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 15 I asked a question in the House regarding the government's commitment to "frank" and "frequent" reporting to Canadians about Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

We on this side of the House remain steadfast in our belief that Canadians deserve greater transparency and greater accountability when it comes to our mission in Afghanistan. Greater transparency and more accountability from the government are key parts of why Liberals supported the recent motion to extend and redefine Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

The House will recall that our amendment specifically called for quarterly reports on the progress of the mission to be tabled in Parliament, as well as calling on the ministers of foreign affairs, international cooperation and national defence to make regular appearances before a special parliamentary committee dealing with Afghanistan.

I was encouraged to see these items included in the motion brought forward by the government. It was a great step toward our position and it was a great step forward for the House to have members and parties working together on the mission in Afghanistan to bring forward a distinctly Canadian compromise on this important international mission.

As has become the norm, unfortunately, for the Conservative government, we are now seeing actions that counter the commitments made here in the House. Most recently, the Conservative government decided to revoke an invitation to opposition members of Parliament to accompany the Minister of National Defence as members of a Canadian delegation to the NATO meetings in Bucharest.

The official opposition is committed in its efforts to work constructively on our mission in Afghanistan.

One of the key recommendations made in the report of the independent panel studying the future of Canada's mission in Afghanistan was for the government to increase the transparency of its actions with respect to the mission, a recommendation the government is once again demonstrating that it is ignoring.

The panel called on the government to rebalance its communications with Canadians about our activities in Afghanistan, providing

more information and analysis on the diplomatic and reconstruction development dimensions of this mission.

The official opposition joins the panel in calling on the government to engage Canadians in a continuous, frank and constructive dialogue about the conditions in Afghanistan and the extent to which Canadian objectives are being achieved.

Part of the Canadian mission is to reflect Canadian values in Afghanistan and promote the rule of law. There has been considerable secrecy concerning the issue of detainees. We have heard cases of torture. Unfortunately, we have learned about these through the media.

In the past, the government has not been straightforward with Canadians with regard to detainees. There is no doubt that we must commit to greater transparency and to respect for a policy on the taking and transferring of prisoners. It is imperative that we know, and it is imperative that Canadians know, that detainees are treated in accordance with the rule of law.

It is our hope that the government remains steadfast on this very important issue and continues to report to Canadians in a transparent and open way so there are no questions that need to be debated.

• (1905)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to talk about the government's efforts in the mission in Afghanistan. I know it is a passion for the member, and we understand that. I agree with my hon. colleague that it is a very important mission. It is a Canadian mission and it is one of the most important post-war missions that Canada has undertaken.

At this time, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the official opposition for working with the government and coming forward with suggestions, which were incorporated into the motion, making it a Canadian motion.

I want to ensure the member that it is a Canadian mission. For that reason, she is right when she said that transparency was of paramount importance to Canadians to ensure the success of this mission. That is the commitment the government has made. That is why we had a debate in the House for two days, to ensure that there was an open discussion and everything was on the table.

I would like to take this opportunity as well to tell my hon. colleague that as a result of the diplomatic effort made by the Manley panel, a bipartisan panel led by the former Liberal deputy prime minister, its recommendations and the diplomatic efforts of the Prime Minister, I am very pleased to announce today that one of the conditions of the motion has been met. NATO has agreed to send 1,000 troops to Kandahar. These troops will be deployed in Kandahar soon, meeting the requirement in the motion passed by the House of Commons.

We agree with the member that this is a very important mission. It is a mission to build Afghanistan, both developmentally and in all ways, and to provide security. I can assure her that the government is absolutely committed to providing full transparency and will do its utmost to ensure that not only Canadians but the official opposition and everyone in Parliament is kept fully informed as the mission progresses.

• (1910)

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that NATO has come through and made the commitment of 1,000 additional troops.

I had the privilege, as a member of Parliament, to go Wainwright, Alberta this past summer to train with 1,053 reservists, mostly from southern Ontario. I was very proud of their commitment and belief that this mission had great value. It was the Liberal government that said, at the invitation of President Karzai, under the auspices of NATO, we would go into this mission.

I visited good friends of mine, Moni and Carman Lagonia, and said goodbye to their 21-year-old son who was going on a mission to Afghanistan. I hope Canadians recognize that the debates we have in the House in no way undermine the absolute pride that we all take and the faith we have in our young men and women in uniform.

Adjournment Proceedings

However, it is absolutely essential that we be able to question the mission and that the mission become redefined as we go forward. It is not just enough to have the 1,000 extra troops. We need to have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I have attended two funerals for soldiers in Calgary. It is always a heart-rending situation when soldiers lay down their lives, but they do it for democracy. I agree with the member that in the House of Commons we stand responsible for sending our people into harm's way and we must ensure that their memories and contributions are recognized.

The member is absolutely right. Transparency is most important. We will endeavour to ensure transparency occurs, that the Afghan compact is met and that the people of Afghanistan are the ultimate beneficiaries of all the sacrifices that Canada has made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:12 p.m.)

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