



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, November 26, 2008**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the Chief Opposition Whip, the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### WEST VANCOUVER—SUNSHINE COAST—SEA TO SKY COUNTRY

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the citizens of my riding for putting their trust in me as their member of Parliament.

My thanks go as well to my wife Donna and my children Shane, Jake and Mei Mei for their loyal support.

[*Translation*]

I thank my colleagues here, in this noble House, for their warm welcome. I hope to make many new friends here, on both sides of this House.

[*English*]

The riding I represent is the fourth largest in Canada in land size, is one of the most spectacular places on earth, and has one of the longest names to match.

One can find productive pulp mills in Powell River and Gibsons; highly sensitive environmental areas in Sechelt and Bowen Island; majestic scenery in West Vancouver, North Vancouver, Squamish and Whistler; and, throughout our riding, business people, scholars and athletes of international acclaim.

Speaking of athletes, I would like to point out that the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games will bring the world to our doorstep.

I invite my fellow hon. members to come visit us in Canada's Olympic riding.

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### EGLINTON—LAWRENCE

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to voice a most sincere expression of thanks to the electors of Eglinton—Lawrence, who have given me the privilege of representing them for a seventh consecutive mandate in the Parliament of Canada.

I did not get their vote of confidence on my own. Since 1988, I have enjoyed the support of my immediate family, including my wife, children, in-laws, and now even grandchildren. As well, friends and volunteers have contributed to my electoral success. Along the way these friends and volunteers have become more than a team. As my wife Mirella puts it, “Our family is growing”. Of this I am certain: without them, I could not have the opportunity to serve the country we love.

I want to live up to their standards and expectations, because they will share my successes and live my accomplishments. To them I say, “*grazie infinite*”.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### MUNICIPALITY OF L'ASSOMPTION

**Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the voters of the riding of Repentigny, who put their trust in me in the October 14 election. It is an honour to serve them here.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the 25th anniversary of the RCM of L'Assomption. This municipality has been inhabited since the 1640s. The colonists who arrived there were among the first to settle along the banks of the St. Lawrence. Today, the municipality has a population of over 112,000 people, and is growing every year. The municipality has a very diverse and vibrant population.

I would like to honour the commitment of everyone who has helped make this one of the most thriving RCMs in Quebec, and in particular, the commitment of the reeve of the RCM and mayor of Repentigny, Chantal Deschamps. Her hard work has greatly contributed to the development of the Lanaudière region.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**STATUS OF WOMEN**

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on November 7, 2008, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women issued a report that was extremely critical of the Canadian government's record on women's rights.

The UN committee was so concerned about the failure of the government to investigate the cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and the low rates of social assistance that it wants Canada to report back within one year.

The committee was also concerned about women's insufficient access to legal aid, affordable housing, child care spaces, and shelters. The committee was concerned as well about the poor representation of women in public life, inequality in the labour market for visible minorities, mistreatment of women prisoners, the cancellation of the court challenges program, and the elimination of funding for advocacy for women's organizations.

Canada has an international obligation to address women's human rights in Canada, as well as an obligation to women in Canada to address the concerns of the committee.

The government needs to take immediate action to advance women's rights in Canada.

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**ICEBREAKER**

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to thank the voters of Prince Albert for the honour of representing them.

I would also like to thank my wife Jerri, my two children Alysia and Brock, and my dad Ivar for their love and unconditional support.

I would like to commend the Prime Minister for his commitment to construct a new icebreaker named in honour of our late prime minister and my late member of Parliament, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker.

This is a great honour for the riding of Prince Albert. Mr. Diefenbaker clearly understood that Canadians could only fulfill their national dream by accepting the challenges and seizing the opportunities presented by our north. I am sure Prince Albert's proud designation as Saskatchewan's gateway to the north helped him to forge this understanding.

Rest assured that as the Prime Minister and the Conservative government pursue the challenges of the north, Prince Albert's residents, businesses and first nations will be there with their knowledge and expertise, just as Mr. Diefenbaker was during his tenure as my member of Parliament and as prime minister.

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**JOHN GRAHAM MACINNES**

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this month Cape Breton and Canada lost a pillar of our community when John Graham MacInnes was taken away from us all too soon.

A retired school teacher from River Bennet, Victoria County, John Graham served as municipal councillor for 23 years. John Graham loved politics. He was a strong Liberal supporter and he was probably the biggest Montreal Canadian fan in Victoria County.

John Graham was involved in every aspect of his community, including his hard work for St. Ann's Bay United Church. He loved animals and was an avid gardener, an amateur actor and a dedicated volunteer.

John Graham MacInnes had a great Gaelic sense of humour and he was always there to help.

We will miss John, as will his wife Joan and his sons Chris and Ken. If ever there was a great example of how to live this all too brief life, John Graham MacInnes, a teacher, provided us with this one: live life to its fullest, and help others as we go through it.

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● (1410)

**NATURAL AREAS CONSERVATION**

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am please to pay tribute today to one of British Columbia's oldest ranching families, the Froleks. After 100 years and four generations, the Frolek family joined together last Friday with the Government of Canada and the Nature Conservancy of Canada to protect almost 8,000 acres of threatened grassland habitat in the Thompson-Nicola Valley.

I am proud to say that this project can be credited to our Prime Minister, who made conservation a clear priority for action with support for the natural areas conservation program.

Since the program began last year, it has helped to acquire 84 new properties, resulting in the protection of 80 species at risk. This is a significant conservation achievement that will benefit all Canadians. I offer my special thanks to the Nature Conservancy and the Frolek family.

This outstanding achievement is an inspiration for all Canadians who care about the land legacy we are leaving our children.

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[Translation]

**KARINE SERGERIE**

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to an outstanding athlete from my riding, Karine Sergerie. Karine lives in Sainte-Catherine and is an Olympic tae kwon do champion who has had an exceptional journey. The people in my area and throughout Quebec are proud of her.

Karine won a silver medal at the Beijing Olympics this past summer. She placed first at the 2006 Pan American championships as well as at the 2007 Pan American Games and world championships.

*Statements by Members*

Recipient of the 2005 National Championships most valuable player and the Taekwondo Spirit awards; 2006 most valuable player at the Pan American championships; 2008 Athlete of the Year by Gala Sports-Québec, Karine Sergerie's courage and determination in sports deserves our admiration.

I wish her the best of luck in her future competitions.

Karine, you are a source of inspiration for us all and we are very proud of you.

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**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, December 6 will be the 19th anniversary of the massacre at the École polytechnique in Montreal, one of the worst acts of violence against women in the history of Canada.

[*English*]

The issue of violence against women is important to me as a Métis woman and a mother of five. I was a police officer for almost 19 years and I have seen first-hand the devastation that it renders.

It was my desire to do more to help victims that inspired me to run, and I am proud to be part of a Conservative government that has a plan to address violence against women, including ensuring justice for victims.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the start of 16 days of activism against violence to women.

Let us, during the next 15 days, have a thought for victims of violence all over the world. Let us not settle for merely reaffirming our commitment to put an end to violence against women, but let us also take steps to eradicate it from the lives of women and girls.

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[*English*]

**KAPYONG BARRACKS**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on May 17, 2007, I questioned the then minister of national defence in the House on the status of the vacant houses on the decommissioned Kapyong Barracks in my riding of Winnipeg South Centre.

The minister did not have the answers then, and we still do not have any. The Treasury Board process for the transfer of the houses to the Canada Lands Company is apparently stalled. Department regulations are in place that allow only members of the military or the RCMP, governmental employees, or the families of governmental employees to live in these houses.

It costs taxpayers \$250,000 to maintain these empty houses. Many Winnipeggers live in either substandard or overpriced housing, and 1,500 people in Winnipeg are homeless. The rental vacancy rate is 1.3%.

We talk about prudent government spending. How can the Conservative government justify billing the taxpayer for keeping these houses empty when there is a real community need?

The government should make these houses available to the community and at the same time move forward with the transfer of the land and houses to the Canada Lands Company.

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**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these are difficult times for forest workers and their families: rising energy costs, the damage done by the softwood dispute and the previous government's failure to act and the mountain pine beetle infestation.

Our government understands that when a mill closes, the whole community is affected. We have acted decisively to help the forest sector, protecting forestry jobs by getting the softwood deal signed, the community development trust, helping forest-dependent communities, funding to mitigate the mountain pine beetle disaster, the target initiative for older workers in tough economic times, investing in innovation, creating new markets and cutting corporate taxes to keep mills competitive.

We have delivered support in the short term and solutions in the long term. This Conservative government is delivering for the forest industry. We are getting the job done for forestry.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**SENIORS**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as I proudly rise in the House today, I want to thank the electors of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for voting to once again honour me with their trust to represent them in this place.

Members will know that many seniors have only their government pensions to sustain them. Earlier this summer, my staff received numerous complaints from seniors who began receiving letters from the government announcing their pensions were increasing by 42¢ a month. Members heard it correctly, a mere 42¢ a month. How insulting.

Now with this huge economic downturn facing Canada, we hear that Canadians must bail out this bank or that corporation. What can seniors expect from the government? History shows us that in hard economic times, the poor and the seniors on fixed incomes suffer the most, prices go up and their buying power goes down and they slip farther and farther behind.

The government needs to put a strategy forward for seniors, and I will fight to ensure that it does.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**LAVAL UNIVERSITY'S ROUGE ET OR**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on November 22 in Hamilton, the Laval University Rouge et Or won its 5th Vanier Cup in 13 years, defeating the University of Western Ontario Mustangs by a score of 44 to 21.

Tomorrow, the residents of Quebec City are invited to assemble at Place Laurier to meet all of the Rouge et Or team members. The people of the Quebec City area are so proud of you and tomorrow they will take advantage of the opportunity to show their love for you and their pride at sharing this amazing season with you, and of course also to celebrate last Saturday's win.

Thanks to the talents and strengths of each player, the Rouge et Or made it known from the start of the season that it was the team to beat. Your hard work, dedication and team spirit are what made you the best.

May I take the opportunity to add the congratulations of my Conservative colleagues from the Quebec City area and the rest of Quebec to my own. Once again, hooray for this win, and we expect great things from you again next season.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development closed the door to the possibility of eliminating the waiting period for employment insurance.

She said that “with any insurance, there is always a wait period”. Yet employment insurance is a kind of social insurance, and comparing the employment insurance waiting period to that for private insurance is unacceptable.

As a result of their ultra-conservative ideology, the Conservatives are consigning families to a life of poverty. Workers are being punished for losing their jobs. Workers have to be able to count on receiving employment insurance the moment they lose their source of income.

In this period of economic instability, the government has once again shown utter disregard for people who are in danger of losing their jobs. That is why the Bloc Québécois will soon be introducing a bill to eliminate the waiting period. I urge all members of the House to support this bill.

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**FIGHTING POVERTY**

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's shameful policy, which consists of leaving Canadians to fend for themselves, is having a devastating effect.

[English]

Feed Nova Scotia reports an increasing number of working poor are turning to food banks. They are employed or recently unemployed.

[Translation]

We are talking about some 704,000 people in just one month, and more than a third of them were children. These are real people who are having serious difficulties, but the current government does not care.

How else do they explain the fact that the Speech from the Throne said nothing about fighting poverty or helping our seniors?

It is time for the Prime Minister to stop talking about a “technical recession” and realize that these families need help, not empty rhetoric.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

[English]

**MEMBER FOR MARKHAM—UNIONVILLE**

**Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is committed to providing our brave men and women fighting in Afghanistan the support they need to do the important work we ask of them. Supplementary estimates tabled this week will provide funding to enhance their safety by continuing vital support such as tanks, engineering support, counter-mortar capability and UAVs.

Unbelievably, the member for Markham—Unionville is questioning this expenditure, yet just a short few years ago, the same hon. member for Markham—Unionville was singing a different tune. He said that when we put men and women in harm's way, we must equip them so as to minimize the risk of injury or death. He said that if we put people in harm's way, we had to give them the proper equipment. He was even prepared to resign his post as minister of defence if it were found that any Canadian died as a result of a lack of preparation or equipment.

Our government is not only talking the talk, but walking the walk. Is the member for Markham—Unionville prepared to live up to his public statements and vote to provide our soldiers in Afghanistan with equipment to minimize injury or death? Will he support our estimates?

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will be a sad day for Canadians because the Conservative government will be delivering its economic update. We are going to go back in time to the days of Mulroney. Taxpayers' efforts and sacrifices will be cancelled out by the new Conservative deficit.

Does the Prime Minister regret declaring, just a few weeks ago, that it was foolish, even ridiculous, to talk about a deficit in Canada? Does the Prime Minister regret misleading Canadians?

[English]

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to be cheered on by the Liberals, the Liberals who in the last election were going increase taxes to Canadians. Now the Liberals are back in the House saying that the Conservatives are spending too much money, that the Conservatives are not worried about Canadians.

Thank goodness the Conservatives won the election so they did not have to face the higher taxes that the Liberals wanted to force on them.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, therefore, no regret from the Prime Minister to have misled Canadians in this way.

The new Conservative deficit has weakened the ability of the government to protect jobs and to get our economy back on track. Is the reason that the government has offered no plan for struggling sectors of our economy, for auto workers, for forestry workers, because his budget is out of control, because his cabinet is bloated, or is it simply that he does not care?

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the answer would be none of the above. In fact, the Prime Minister cares dearly.

The Prime Minister is doing everything possible to ensure that Canadians will not feel the impact of the economic crisis that other countries are. That is why the Prime Minister is consulting on a regular basis with other leaders around the world, which are facing worse economic times than we are here. It is why our finance minister is consulting with ministers across the provinces to ensure that whatever we do is well coordinated.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know the Conservatives have allowed 45,000 auto sector jobs to be lost. Yesterday a Conference Board report said that Canada would lose 15,000 auto assembly jobs next year. That means 100,000 more auto sector jobs lost across the country.

Why will the Prime Minister not offer Canadians a real plan to help the auto sector? Where is the plan to get our economy back on track?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, a year ago almost, in budget 2008, we started a process of investing in innovation, in science and technology and in our sectoral industries. We added an automotive innovation fund as part of our work to protect the innovation in that sector.

We continue to work with the auto sector and with our provincial counterparts, the Ontario Liberals, in favour of an auto sector that is innovative and competitive for decades to come.

• (1425)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's propaganda machine was out in full force last night trying to divert attention away from his responsibility for the deficit. The Prime Minister expanded cabinet from an original 26 to a new 37 four weeks ago, full ministers, inflated salaries, personal cars and drivers, bloated staffs, bigger and more offices and millions in contingency funds.

### Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister reduce his cabinet to a sensible level, cut the 37 limo service and cut the bloated staffing, show leadership and cut cabinet excess?

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is pretty rich coming from the Liberals.

The facts are that the size—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We have to be able to hear the answer of the government House leader. The member for Malpeque has a supplementary coming up. The government House leader has to be heard.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** So much for the new decorum, Mr. Speaker.

The facts are that the size of our cabinet has not increased. What we have done is add ministers of state—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, order. The government House leader has the floor. We will have a little order, please.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Mr. Speaker, I will try again. We have added ministers of state for specific policy areas. It is important in this time of economic challenge that we have ministers who are focused on seniors' issues, focused on women's issues, focused on business and tourism, science and technology, and regional development.

Is the hon. member actually suggesting that these particular Canadians are not worthy of a minister?

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, so much for responsible spending. Let me be specific. Let us turn to P.E.I.'s regional minister who is currently attempting to break an office lease signed by the former regional minister, the now Minister of Defence, to move the office to her riding 30 miles away; shopping for new offices, shopping for new furniture, and worse, Conservatives are lined up at her door and receiving high-salaried patronage appointments.

Will the Prime Minister stop his wasteful cabinet excess?

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for the P.E.I. wheat board over there.

What I have already said is true. We have added ministers of state for specific policy areas. We do not apologize for that at all. Our cabinet has not increased. Our ministers of state are focused on addressing the needs of Canadians. I urge the member to wait until tomorrow and we will see who wants to lead by example.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister would not hear any talk of a deficit and would not even use the word “recession”. Now, on the eve of the United Nations climate change conference, the Minister of the Environment is suggesting that the economic slowdown, which he denied a few weeks ago, could take priority over the fight against climate change.

Would the Prime Minister not do better to listen to the UN Secretary General, who has said that the economic crisis should not serve as an excuse for inaction in the fight against climate change?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member. As I have already said, I am going to attend the meeting in Poznan, where Canada will support the development of a new agreement under the auspices of the UNFCCC, as we did during the other negotiations in Copenhagen and Poznan.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it took a minute to figure out who was responsible for the environment on the other side.

I believe that since the environment and the economy are connected, the measures proposed to deal with the economic crisis must also support sustainable development. The government, which is on the oil companies' payroll, needs to make a fundamental change of direction.

Will the Prime Minister take advantage of his economic statement to propose measures that promote sustainable development?

• (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the government said in the throne speech, we are committed to reducing Canada's greenhouse gases, and in particular, in the context of renewable energies, achieving by 2020 perhaps as much as 90% of Canada's electricity from non-emitting sources. This will clearly require investments in renewable energy, whether we speak of geothermal energy, solar energy, the bringing on of new hydroelectricity. These are all issues with which the government will deal in the days ahead.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, economic development and the environment are linked. Paper mills and forestry companies realized this and made considerable efforts to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. What they want now are absolute targets and for 1990 to be the reference year, so we can have a real carbon exchange.

Big businesses see the value of Kyoto. Why does the government not see it?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these issues will be raised in Poznan. Climate change continues to be a major priority for Canadians. As I already said, I will attend the meetings in Poznan. I will approach the primary players during the negotiations at this conference. Clearly, we have

principles, and I want to make people understand Canada's position at this conference.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, next week in Poznan, the 14th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will open. The Minister of the Environment has used the economic situation to lower expectations and justify his inaction.

Instead of using the economic crisis as an excuse for not doing anything, could the minister tell us what Canada's negotiating position will be in Poland come December?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we disagree. We inherited three realities. First of all, there is the current international economic situation. Second, there is a new president-elect in the United States. Third, there are the negotiations in Poznan, which will conclude in Copenhagen. The conference that will be held in Poznan is very important. It is very important to me and to the Government of Canada.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly clear that the government does not know how to deal with the current economic crisis.

The only new measures it wants to introduce are minor economies of scale, symbolic measures. We are ready to do our part.

Has the Prime Minister now realized that these measures—supposedly “leading by example”—will not fix the problem? Not enough is being done. When will we see concrete measures, concrete actions to fix the current economic crisis?

[English]

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, speaking about leading by example, the example was set by the finance minister a year ago by reducing taxes for Canadians, \$21 billion in tax relief in this year alone. That sort of leadership provided 2% of the GDP. That leadership, I would suggest, led to what the United Kingdom did just this week, and that is almost exactly the same thing.

I wish the hon. member would watch what this government is doing, and that is leadership on the economic front.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a comparison between what Great Britain is doing and what the Canadian government is doing simply does not wash. Great Britain is taking bold and strong action of a very significant kind. Here we see virtually nothing. In fact, what he does not seem to understand and what the government does not understand is the so-called permanent stimulus approach they have taken underlies the recession that we are seeing now. It is a wrong-headed approach. Even the Premier of Ontario is now saying that across the board corporate tax cuts will not get the job done.

When are we going to see some real action, some real stimulus in the economy?



•(1435)

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind hon. members that all of the things I spoke about, all of the stimuli that this government has put forward, the NDP voted against. If we could have a little help in this House, we might actually instill some enthusiasm in Canadians that the end is not near. We have some positive outlooks. We have job layoffs and we realize that, but this year alone, we have 200,000 net new jobs. The NDP voted against the stimulus that assisted that.

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#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder what world the Conservatives are living in over there. There are 15,000 more jobs that we are going to be losing in the auto sector in the upcoming year, and yet we get these bromides from over there. The forestry sector is in the context of collapsing before our very eyes.

What Canadians are asking is, is this a government that is willing to stand behind the auto sector and the forestry sector, or does it just want to bellow in the House of Commons with meaningless comments?

It is time we got some real action. It is time that Canadians who want some help in the economic crisis got some help from the government with EI reform.

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that comes from a leader of a party that voted against all of the things we did for the forestry sector, all of the things we have done already for the auto sector. We are engaged with the auto sector. The member is an individual who, when he was a Toronto councillor, wanted to ban each and every single car in the city of Toronto from getting to the city in the first place. That was his answer for the auto sector. I wonder if the CAW heard of that one.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what our auto industry needs is a coordinated, concurrent effort with the United States. Anything less than that will result in the protection of U.S. jobs at the expense of Canadian jobs. Anything less than that is only going to worsen the new Conservative deficit.

Will the Conservative Minister of Industry tell us exactly with whom in the Bush administration and in the new Obama economic team he has met to ensure that Canadian jobs are protected and not siphoned across the border?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind members of the House that the president-elect, the premier of Ontario and the Prime Minister of this country are all saying the same thing. We need long-term sustainability. We do not need back of the envelope plans. We need a business plan and a business model that will work for the future. Barack Obama is saying that. Dalton McGuinty is saying that. The Prime Minister is saying that, and we are proud of our Prime Minister.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada stated that Canada will lose up to 15,000 more auto assembly jobs, which means 100,000 lost jobs in total by the end of 2009, 100,000 Canadian jobs. The U.S. Congress on its own will not protect Canadian jobs. That is the responsibility

#### Oral Questions

of the Conservatives, but all we hear from that minister is empty rhetoric.

How much longer will workers and their families have to wait before that ineffective Conservative minister finally acts to protect the auto jobs in this country?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are serious about our auto sector and indeed the entire economy. We are not part of the ready-fire-aim gang over there. We are methodically working on the best economic strategy for this country. We are working with our stakeholders. We are working with the auto sector. Members on that side of the House have no plans, no promises, except a car tax and a carbon tax which people in Canada could not afford to pay. That is not good enough anymore.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this economic mess, which was brought on by the Conservatives' mismanagement, is now affecting automobile dealers. It has become increasingly difficult for them to obtain credit, which affects both the dealers and consumers.

Why is the Conservative industry minister refusing to help automobile dealers who are also facing this crisis? Where is the plan?

•(1440)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the question posed relates to the availability of credit. As the member will know, in Bill C-50, which the opposition for the most part voted against, we provided the Bank of Canada with additional powers in order to provide liquidity in the system. We have also taken some extraordinary steps as a government in the past number of weeks to ensure adequate liquidity in the system so that not only can credit be available, but that it can be available on reasonable terms.

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** We are looking for guarantees, Mr. Speaker.

Car dealers account for more than 140,000 jobs in this country. The economic situation is worsening day by day. Dealers in Montreal, in regions across Quebec and throughout the rest of Canada will have to shut down because the Conservatives refuse to take action.

Are we to understand that the only help the Prime Minister was willing to give automobile dealers was to increase the number of limousines for his cabinet? Where is the plan?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know which statistics the hon. member has been looking at, but they must be American statistics on car sales, which are down dramatically this year as we know. In our country, in our successful economy called Canada, in fact our car sales are on track for record sales this year. That is in our country, not in the United States.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the government was unable to respond to the Bloc Québécois' suggestion about creating a fund to support individuals who renovate their houses to make them more energy efficient.

Will the government act on this suggestion in order to give a boost to the renovation industry in these hard times and to promote energy efficiency, and will it announce the creation of such a fund in its economic statement?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is helping homeowners, small businesses and industry to make wise choices to save energy, money and help clean up our environment. We will continue to work with all parties to bring that about and put in sensible policies that consumers can use, and that will improve our environmental well-being. We will help Canadians become more energy efficient as well with amendments to the Energy Efficiency Act which will cover more products more effectively.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, let me try another suggestion. David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, said that to get the country out of the current crisis, the government must invest in public works.

Does the government realize that, by acting on this suggestion and introducing a regulation requiring all federal organizations to use forest products in federal construction, it would be giving the forestry industry a much-needed boost?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we talked about the economy in our throne speech, and we made commitments. We want to resolve the economic situation, and tomorrow, the Minister of Finance will be delivering his economic statement.

We hope that the opposition will cooperate. When it comes to public works, one thing is certain: the government must always ensure that it is getting good value for taxpayers' money. That is our government's primary responsibility.

\* \* \*

**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, not only must the government help this industry by promoting the use of forest products, but it must also help the communities affected by the forestry crisis, which has been exacerbated by the current economic slowdown.

To support his community, does the Minister of Finance intend to bring back a program to support diversification in the regions hit hard by the forestry crisis?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know how awful it is when a mill closes. Every family, every store, and every corner of the community is affected by it. That is why we have a comprehensive plan to address this. We are

thinking about the future. We are investing in innovation. We are introducing new market opportunities. We are cutting corporate taxes to keep these mills open. We are dealing with this in the short-term and we are going to fix this in the long-term.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, to help struggling industries like the clothing and textile industries, the federal government should follow the example of many governments and pass legislation on preferential procurement practices, so that the \$50 billion it spends on goods and services will benefit businesses in Quebec and Canada first.

Will the Minister of Finance include such a measure in his economic statement?

● (1445)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I have had the opportunity to review the proposals that have been put forward by the Bloc and to have some discussion on those proposals. Those are certainly matters that we can look into as budgeting items as we prepare the budget for 2009. Tomorrow's statement, as I said to the House before, is not a mini-budget. It is an economic update that will be presented to the House tomorrow at 4 p.m.

\* \* \*

**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the British Columbia forestry industry is experiencing record lows in sales. Tens of thousands of forestry workers in B.C. are out of work, their families are suffering, and whole communities are being flattened; and I might add, while the cabinet across the aisle and its expense budgets were being fattened. The Conservative minister is in denial if she thinks that her current strategy is working. I have news; it is not.

The forest industry deserves to know just what is the Conservative plan to help people in this ailing sector?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have provided support in British Columbia with respect to the mountain pine beetle infestation to restore the long-term well-being of effective communities through the forest industry long-term competitive program. We are dealing with innovation. We are investing in innovation and we are expanding new market opportunities.

There is no question these are difficult times for the industries. I am speaking to my caucus colleagues about it and I am hearing it loud and clear from the members opposite, but what I want Canadians to understand is that the government understands it, knows it, and will fix this problem.

*Oral Questions*

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite the minister to Mackenzie where 1,400 people have lost their jobs in the forestry sector and she can explain to them how effective her plan has been

Yes, the pine bark beetle has hammered the B.C. forestry sector, but the Conservatives have failed on their promise to help fight this infestation. Now the industry is devastated by market conditions and the Conservatives have again failed to support the workers sidelined by massive job losses.

Instead of denying responsibility for their new Conservative deficit, when will the Conservatives actually take action to help suffering forestry workers?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am informed that I have been invited to the area by the government House leader, since it is his constituency. So I thank the member very much for the invitation as well.

We are very concerned about the damage caused to our forestry industry by the mountain pine beetle. We know that this devastation is felt by families and communities. That is why we invested in it. We are responding and we are getting the job done.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the forestry industry in New Brunswick has had its share of difficulties over the past year. Sawmills and paper plants have closed down across the province. Whether in Miramichi or Dalhousie, workers have felt abandoned. Instead of acting, the Conservatives created a new Conservative deficit.

When will the forestry workers in my riding and the rest of New Brunswick get any real help from the Conservatives?

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times already in the House in the past week, our government understands that these are difficult times for forestry workers. We have invested in the past. We have invested in the short-term. We have addressed the matters that are going on with the mill closings. We understand that it is a very difficult time for people in this transition.

In the future, we look to how great this industry is and how resilient it is. We will invest in innovation. We will help to expand new market opportunities. We will continue to deliver those corporate tax cuts which will keep the mills competitive in this country.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government does not understand anything about the forestry crisis. Over the past year, it has left workers to suffer, and now it wants people to believe that the government will save them.

Why has the Conservative government done nothing over the past year? The reality is that workers, families and the industry want a plan. When and how will the government put forward a plan to ensure the survival of the forestry industry and to ensure that workers can get back to work for the well-being of their families?

• (1450)

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to admit this is the most I have been up and down in a long time and I am enjoying the exercise in the House today.

In terms of how the programs that the government introduced have been responded to and have been received, I can say that the mayor of Port Alberni in British Columbia had the following to say this October about funding available through the community development trust:

We are really pleased to be receiving these funds. This will put some of the laid-off forest industry workers in our community to work at a good wage—

This applies to all regions of Canada. This applies to all workers. These programs are there to help the people of Canada and we are delivering them.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the motion passed last March by the House specifically called for the government to secure medium-lift helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles to better protect our brave men and women in Afghanistan.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell the House when we will have these helicopters and UAVs in Afghanistan?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing our brave soldiers with the best possible equipment. In fact, we have recently purchased six Chinook helicopters and UAVs in addition to those that were leased, all of which will be operational next year.

I am pleased to tell the House that we will also deploy eight specially-equipped utility Griffin helicopters to act as escorts for these Chinooks. Most importantly, this will help reduce the risk to soldiers and civilians from ambushes, landmines and IEDs, all of this saving lives and continuing the important work of Canadian soldiers in theatre.

*Oral Questions***AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today, Magna auto parts announced it is closing two more plants, so 850 more people will be fired in the auto industry. Yesterday, the Conference Board forecast 15,000 more auto jobs will be lost in the next year. That is 100,000 more jobs that will disappear across Canada. Already EI claims have risen by 30% in Windsor and 96% in Oshawa. Workers all across southern Ontario are worried about providing for their families, keeping their homes and securing their retirement.

How many more jobs will have to be lost before the minister gets the message? He has to show leadership and he has to show it right now.

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was made aware of this decision just before question period. Of course, I am saddened by the decision, which affects many lives and families in the Newmarket-Aurora area and indeed throughout the GTA. Obviously, we will be there with all the support programs that one would expect from the Government of Canada.

However, we are here to look after the long-term sustainability of an industry as well, which includes the parts industry, about which we are engaged with the auto sector and about which we are engaged with the Government of Ontario. We are also having regard to the situation in Washington.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** What is sad, Mr. Speaker, is when we compare what is happening in Canada to what is happening in the United States.

Earlier this year, the U.S. government already allocated \$25 billion to transform its auto industry to build the new, green, fuel efficient vehicles of the future. It is fighting for the jobs of the future while the Canadian government is doing nothing. No wonder nobody wants to meet with this minister in Washington.

Will the minister at least come to Windsor tomorrow to meet with the leaders from industry, unions, suppliers and municipalities to explain what the government will do? Will he at least show his face to the workers, the families, and the businesses that are on the brink of losing everything?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these kinds of issues affect everybody throughout the country. They affect my riding as much as the hon. member's riding perhaps, or at least in the same industry.

We have been active. The hon. member should know that we created an auto innovation fund, which we have agreed in our platform, in our throne speech, to continue to improve and augment as well. We are there for auto innovation. We are there to ensure that the cars of the future are built, in part at least, in Canada

The fact of the matter is we want long-term solutions and that is exactly what Barack Obama and Dalton McGuinty are saying.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the looming economic crisis demands daring

and creativity. To date, these qualities have been lacking in the government. Difficulty in balancing budgets may be more widespread especially in municipalities where, if nothing is done, there will be inevitable increases in property taxes.

Does the Minister of Finance plan on adopting, in his economic update, the Bloc Québécois proposal to immediately increase to 5¢ the gasoline taxes transferred to municipalities, to move up the date?

• (1455)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government intends to run the economy and the budget in a responsible way. That is an important thing to do. That includes creating stimulus in the economy by reducing taxes, personal income taxes, and leaving more money in the hands of Canadians. I know this is a foreign idea to the members opposite in the Liberal Party.

We reduced the GST by two percentage points, leaving this money in the hands of Canadians to spend and stimulate the economy, and we reduced business taxes, all of which the Bloc voted against last year in this House.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, meanwhile, the Conservative Party ridiculed the Bloc Québécois proposal for a high speed train between Quebec City and Windsor and is doing nothing until next spring's budget.

Why is the government not making a concrete commitment to the high speed train that all stakeholders support and that would ensure sustainable development, protection for the environment and support for the manufacturing sector?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was the Minister of Transportation, he announced on this government's behalf that we would be working with the Governments of Quebec and Ontario to review the study carried out 15 years ago. Public transportation is very important. This is a major project. It is not something that can be carried out immediately but we are working with both provincial governments to see what can be done in the future.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the government House leader cannot even count cabinet spots, it is not surprising these Conservatives cannot balance their budget.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Faced with the crisis in the automotive sector, the Minister of Industry does not see the need for a joint Canada-U.S. response. Therefore, he is preparing us for the transfer of thousands of jobs to the United States. If he becomes involved in the negotiations too late, he will have to make big concessions to the U.S.

Are the Conservatives incompetent or negligent?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we did manage to bring in the tax reductions that meant a great deal in the auto innovation fund and a great deal to the auto industry.

What we will not do in order to balance the budget is what the Liberal Party of Canada did in the mid-1990s, the shameful legacy of the Liberal Party of Canada balancing the budget on the backs of schools, colleges, universities, families, poor people in Canada. That is the legacy of the Liberal Party of Canada.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Conservatives that was in response to their \$42 billion deficit. At the time, however, they told us that the cuts were not deep enough.

On the auto sector, the Conservatives just do not get it. If the U.S. makes repayable loans, all the money has to be spent in the U.S., not Canada. If Canada does not act well before January or February, Canadian auto subsidiaries would likely go bankrupt.

Is the finance minister refusing to act because of his huge deficit or is it because of his infamous view that Ontario is—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was looking for an authority on the terrible job that the Liberal government did in the mid-1990s, hurting ordinary Canadians, balancing the budget on their backs, and I found an authority. The authority said:

The [Liberal] government balanced its books by slashing transfers to the provinces by forcing the provinces...to...face deficits and health care systems and education systems in a crisis as a result of its inability and irresponsibility to actually tighten its own belt more significantly.

That authority was the member for Kings—Hants.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a government spokesperson has admitted that the employment insurance fund is insufficient. This is no way to manage money, especially money that belongs to Canadian workers. People who pay employment insurance premiums must be able to receive that money if they lose their job.

Given the fact that we are in a recession and unemployment is rising, will the government finally reform the employment insurance program? Will it ensure that Canadians who contribute can qualify for a program that belongs to them and not to the Conservative government?

*[English]*

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance fund is being reformed to ensure that those premiums that are collected go directly to the benefit of the workers who have suffered the losses, and it will be there when the workers need it to be there.

We will ensure that the fees collected will be paid for benefits. We have put in \$2 billion to ensure that we can backstop that. If we need to go beyond that, we will backstop it further.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that answer is cold comfort to unemployed workers in Ontario. EI claims in that province are up by 14%. They are up 30% in Windsor and up a staggering 96.4% in the finance minister's own backyard of Oshawa, and those numbers do not even take into account the countless workers who should be eligible but are not.

To add insult to injury, it has been estimated that the average unemployed, laid off worker in Ontario receives \$4,600 less in EI benefits than those in the rest of Canada.

Will the government ensure that all unemployed workers get the benefits they have paid for and get equal treatment regardless of where they live in this country?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance program is applicable to everyone across Canada. Everyone is entitled to apply and receive what they are entitled to.

In addition to that, we have obviously done the community development fund that helps those in regions where they suffer losses that are particular and peculiar to those regions. We have also had the Canada labour agreement that allows workers who lose their jobs to get trained and to move up in the job scale to find other work.

We are doing everything we possibly can to soften the blow and ensure that Canadians are protected, are able to work and continue to raise families and take care of those who are close to them.

\* \* \*

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the good people of Miramichi, New Brunswick for their confidence in me.

Violence against women is an important issue for all Canadians. The government has taken concrete steps to address violence against women, from passing the Tackling Violent Crimes Act to endorsing the Iqaluit declaration.

Could the minister of state tell the House of any recent accomplishments the government has made in combatting violence against women, domestically and internationally?

*Points of Order*

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has consistently demonstrated its commitment to women's issues. The Prime Minister appointed the first minister of state who is solely dedicated to the Status of Women.

I am also very proud that our government recently joined the UNIFEM campaign to say no to violence. Canada joins 159 ministers and heads of state from 60 governments in supporting UNIFEM's call to see an end to violence against women.

The announcement is particularly important as we mark the 16 days of activism against gender violence, including Canada's day of remembrance, December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, jobs are disappearing in this country and yet to date the promised investment by the Conservatives on infrastructure has not happened, investment that could see jobs created.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has said that the \$3 billion the Conservatives committed to has not been spent.

Why have the Conservatives not invested this money, which would create hundreds of jobs, not only in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but thousands of jobs throughout the cities and towns of this country?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me be the first to congratulate the member on her election to the House of Commons. We are looking forward to working with her on what we could do to flow infrastructure funds and what we could do to help create jobs and open opportunities.

We had some good meetings with the Canadian Federation of Municipalities, four last week alone and one with the Prime Minister. We have agreed to make changes to the process so we will see decisions made quicker and the federal green light given as soon as possible.

We are committed to working with the provinces to get the job done. If the member opposite has specific suggestions, we would be more than happy to meet with her and to look at them.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

[Translation]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees that young Omar Khadr should be immediately removed from Guantanamo and brought back to Canada—everyone but the Conservatives, that is. The Supreme Court of Canada, senior Foreign Affairs officials, the Canadian Bar Association, the Association des avocats de la défense de Montréal, the opposition parties, everyone condemns the government's inaction and insensitivity. We are talking about a child soldier, a Canadian citizen, who has been tortured and mistreated.

Instead of giving us empty rhetoric about something that is tarnishing Canada's reputation, will the Minister of Foreign Affairs take his role as a diplomat seriously and do the right thing by bringing Omar Khadr home?

[English]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our position remains unchanged because, unlike many prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay, Omar Khadr has actually been charged with serious crimes. He is in a judicial process to determine his guilt or innocence. We support this process entirely.

\* \* \*

**FINANCE**

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business fears big banks will move merchant fees for credit card transactions to an unfair percentage system. This means that independent businesses could be looking at increases on fees of up to 10,000%, much of which will get passed on to the consumer.

Another hike on interest for credit cardholders and new fees for small business all add up to the lowest consumer confidence in 20 years.

When will the government recognize it has a responsibility during tough economic times to protect consumers not just banks?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** We already have, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that obligation, which is why we fund the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada and why we fund financial literacy in Canada. It is to give Canadians, particularly young Canadians, an opportunity to understand interest rates, to understand compound interest and to understand the benefits of paying bills on time.

These are important matters that we want Canadians to be educated about so they can make intelligent choices in what is a competitive financial system in Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I recall your reference to decorum and discipline at the time you were campaigning for the position of Speaker, and how you said that we were going to have to change the way things were done. I do not wish to cast any aspersions whatsoever on my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but during oral questions on November 24, in connection with an extremely serious question in which there was no place for joking, he said that he was speaking of Omar Khadr and not of Coderre.

Mr. Speaker, some may find this amusing, but this House is respectful and at no time are members' names to be used. I would therefore like the minister to make amends for this and to withdraw his words. I would also, Mr. Speaker, like you to take it into consideration so that such a thing will never be repeated, since you let it go by.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right, it was an extremely serious matter. However, it was people in the opposition who said "not Coderre" to which I replied that no, it was not "Coderre" but "Khadr". Yes, this is a serious matter. Obviously, I regret that my friend and colleague was put in this situation, but I repeat that it was members of the opposition who said this.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, he can try to wriggle out of this but one cannot do indirectly what is not allowed directly. Hansard is clear. My name did appear and I would ask my colleague not to try this again. I would simply ask him to say he withdraws his words. I would also like a ruling from you on this.

● (1510)

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, I have no intention whatsoever of withdrawing my words, but I shall do so reluctantly if you oblige me to.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the problem here is that the minister did not use the member's name with the intent of naming him. I am afraid that I did not hear the other members' comments at the time, but he responded to something someone else said. That is why I did not say anything. He also said "I did not say 'one name', I said 'another name'". Therefore, he did not mention the member's name in his capacity as a member of Parliament or as a member of this House. He was simply clarifying the pronunciation of what he did say.

I do not think it is necessary for him to retract his words. He explained himself. I hope that this explanation is acceptable for all hon. members. I think that the situation has been adequately explained and that the hon. member for Bourassa was not really named in the reply. It was to clarify something that another member had said. I consider that this situation has been resolved, and I think we can move forward.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** What I understand is that there are double standards in the House.

**The Speaker:** Not at all.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a report entitled, "Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan". This report is further to the recommendations of the independent panel on Afghanistan, also known as the Manley panel.

I might just add at this time that we continue to be indebted to our men and women in uniform who are making a difference in

Afghanistan, saving lives and protecting freedoms of everybody. We appreciate that.

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## POINTS OF ORDER

### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the record. Yesterday in question period I responded to a question from my critic, the member for Vancouver South, where I referenced 35,000 documents when in fact it was 3,500. I wanted the record to be clear and pristine, in keeping with your efforts, Mr. Speaker.

\* \* \*

## INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** 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 Canadian delegation of the Canadian group of the Interparliamentary Union concerning its participation at the 116th IPU Assembly and related meetings in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia from April 29 to May 4, 2007.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie respecting its participation at the APF Network of Women Parliamentarians Seminar on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, on May 21 and 22, 2008.

[English]

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, 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 Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the visit to the United States by the defence and security committee held in Washington, D.C., the United States of America, January 28 to February 2.

Also, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the visit to Turkey by the sub-committee on democratic governance held in Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey, March 24 to 27.

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● (1515)

## CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-229, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals).

*Routine Proceedings*

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce, yet again, a bill dealing with animal cruelty. It is my hope that this will be the session when we finally pass laws that modernize our antiquated animal cruelty laws.

The bill I am presenting is the result of more than 10 years of compromise among the animal welfare groups, the animal use industries, this House and the other place, and has been passed by the House of Commons on two separate occasions, which gives me hope that it will be swiftly passed now that it has been introduced.

It is also my pleasure to introduce a bill that would amend the Criminal Code to add new sections for animal cruelty offences.

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

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (cruelty to animals).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the House has passed very similar legislation. In this instance, I referenced earlier that I was bringing forward a bill to close loopholes that exist within our current Criminal Code.

With so many SPCA officers coming forward to say that they see horrific abuse against animals that is not acted upon, that people get away with it all the time, that those same places have later reports of domestic abuse or abuse against children and when we know this is a precursor to other types of activities of violence against human beings, it is something that is long overdue. These laws have not been properly modernized since Victorian times, over 100 years ago.

It is my hope that both this bill and the one I introduced just moments ago can be passed swiftly.

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

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-231, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (consecutive sentences).

She said: Mr. Speaker, volume discounts for rapists and murderers, that is the law in Canada today. It is called concurrent sentencing that cheapens life. The life of the second, the third or the eleventh victim does not count in the sentencing equation. The lowest price is the law every day in our courts.

This was true when this bill passed third reading in the House by a 4:1 margin in 1999. It was true last month when the premier of Saskatchewan called for consecutive sentencing when a child killer who confessed to sexually assaulting 40 women was freed without serving one day for any of those 40 victims.

Consecutive sentences for multiple murderers and rapists remain the only way to bring proportionality to sentencing and bring a measure of justice to victims of immeasurable crimes.

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

[Translation]

**SUPREME COURT ACT**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-232, An Act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the seconder for this bill, the member for Nickel Belt. This bill would amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages). Canada has two official languages. To ensure the equality of both official languages, the bill amends the Supreme Court Act and introduces a new requirement for judges appointed to the Supreme Court to understand English and French without the assistance of an interpreter.

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

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● (1520)

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-233, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (benefit period increase for regional rate of unemployment).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill. Once again, I would like to thank my colleague from Nickel Belt for seconding this bill.

This bill would amend the Employment Insurance Act. This bill would increase benefit periods under the Employment Insurance Act based on regional rates of unemployment. Now, more than ever, in light of the economic slowdown, we need an employment insurance system that belongs to workers. This bill will help Canadian workers who lose their jobs, particularly given current economic conditions. The program belongs to the workers and businesses that contribute to it.

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

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce C-234, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (length of benefit period).



*Routine Proceedings*

He said: Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you have noticed, I have many excellent bills that this House could pass—and hopefully will. This bill would increase the duration of benefits, first by providing that a week in which at least 15 hours were worked counts as a week of insurable employment, and second by providing that every 30 hours of the total hours worked counts as a week of insurable employment.

Once again, the bill would improve the employment insurance system. Perhaps I am repeating myself, but this employment insurance system belongs to the workers and to the companies who contributed to it, and not to the government, which would like to use it to balance the budget and not run a deficit, to the detriment of workers.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADA LABOUR CODE**

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-235, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (occupational disease registry).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present this bill for the consideration of the House and I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for seconding this important legislation. She would understand, as the labour critic for our caucus, that the steelworkers in Sault Ste. Marie at Local 2251 are in the midst of a very aggressive and active campaign to bring forward people who have been hurt or became sick and can trace that back to the workplace.

The registry would make it a lot easier for them to gather that information. It would make it a lot easier for workers across the country to gather the information they would need to go before insurance boards and other kinds of compensation boards to get recompense for their sickness or their injury. It would also give workers information that they sometimes would want in terms of industries and their record for occupational health and diseases concern. This is really important in the world we now live in where labour is so mobile.

I am happy today to table this and I hope that at some point the House will deem to pass it into law.

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

\* \* \*

● (1525)

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT**

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-236, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Sault Ste. Marie.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this comes from my community. There is an interest in having the district Algoma recognized in the name of my riding. Historically we have had Algoma attached to many of our major industries, Algoma Steel, Algoma Central Railroad and other important institutions in Sault Ste. Marie, the Algoma District School Board, for example.

A poll of my constituents has been done across the riding, giving them three options. They think this one would be appropriate to the cause.

My riding of Sault Ste. Marie is situated between three of the major Great Lakes. It is a wonderful place in the country, and I am very pleased to be its representative. Today ask the House for its support in this effort to change its name so it would more adequately reflect the nature and breadth of that wonderful riding.

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

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS****HEAVY TRUCK TRAFFIC**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today, for the fifth consecutive day, I wish to present a petition not only from the people of Ottawa—Vanier, the riding I have the honour of representing, but from both sides of the national capital region, Quebec and Ontario.

The petitioners call upon the NCC, as the representative of the Government of Canada involved in the file of building a bridge across the river to remove the heavy truck traffic from the of the nation's capital, to do so in an appropriate location and not to move the trucks from one neighbourhood of established communities to another such community.

They call upon the Government of Canada to instruct the National Capital Commission to proceed with a detailed assessment of an interprovincial bridge linking Canotek Industrial Park to the Gatineau airport, which is option 7 of the first phase of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment.

**DARFUR**

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a petition on behalf of numerous Canadians. The petitioners state that Canada must act to stop the humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition by residents of British Columbia on the conflict in Darfur, forwarded by Simon Child. He, along with these concerned citizens, have said that the conflict has killed 300,000 people and displaced 2 million more.

The petitioners call upon the government to increase humanitarian assistance to relieve the suffering and to press for peace talks. As they have said, it is our duty as citizens of a fortunate nation to help those who are desperately in need.

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions signed by Canadians across my riding and across Ontario and Canada who seek in the first instance and, most important, that consideration be given and international aid efforts renewed to help increase our aid to the victims of conflict in Darfur.

**HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT**

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from the same Canadian groups and individuals.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners call upon the Canadian government and Parliament to amend the Health of Animals Act with regard to long distance transportation of farm animals consistent with welfare norms usually established for husbandry.

## DARFUR

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition to the House from the people of the city of White Rock and the residents of British Columbia.

The petitioners wish to draw to the attention of the House that genocide has taken place in the Darfur region of Sudan and that approximately 300,000 people have been killed and 2 million more have been displaced. The Sudanese government has delayed the deployment of a 26,000-troop peacekeeping force in the region.

Therefore, they call upon Parliament to pressure the Sudanese government to allow the full 26,000 UNAMID peacekeeping force in the region, to pressure the Sudanese government to begin peace talks and accords with the Janjaweed, the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement, to increase land-based humanitarian relief efforts, to pressure the United States and Canadian governments and other world leaders to increase land-based humanitarian relief efforts, to offer helicopters to the UNAMID peacekeeping force, to persuade the Sudanese government to comply with the jurisdiction of the ICC and the United Nations Security Council resolution 1593 and to encourage surrounding governments to allow refugees sanctuary.

• (1530)

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present. One of them is very timely. It is about the recent job losses in the forestry industry of British Columbia which has caused tremendous financial hardship for forestry workers. It has to do specifically with the processing times for applications for employment insurance. Some workers have had to wait up to four weeks.

Unemployed forestry workers have paid a significant portion of their income over the years into the EI fund and the federal government has collected \$57 billion more in EI premiums than it has paid out in EI benefits since restricting eligibility in 1996.

The petitioners specifically call for action on the several initiatives put forward by the member for Acadie—Bathurst in a number of private members' bills. They have asked for a just transition fund as well as for changes to EI.

## HOUSING

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the leaky condo crisis in British Columbia. Certainly in my riding there are people who are in danger of losing their homes. The petition talks about the fact that the cost of repairing leaky condos in British Columbia has put a tremendous financial strain on homeowners through no fault of their own. The Barrett commission has suggested that CMHC has failed to be an advocate for homebuyers affected by the leaky condo crisis in the coastal climate of British Columbia. The petitioners are asking the government to fulfill its 2006 election promise to review the leaky condo crisis and hold an inquiry into the role of CMHC in the

delivery of substandard constructed homes and to adopt Motion No. 86, which died on the order paper, to provide urgent relief to prevent further social and economic devastation.

## ASBESTOS

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition signed by thousands of Canadians from all over the country, including many from Kingston, Ontario, in your own riding, Mr. Speaker. The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to recognize that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known. In fact, more Canadians die from asbestos now than all other occupational causes combined, yet Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world.

The petitioners also point out that Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use. They call this corporate welfare for corporate serial killers.

The petitioners call upon Canada to ban asbestos in all its forms and introduce a just transition program for asbestos workers in the communities in which they live; to end all government subsidies of asbestos both in Canada and abroad; and for Canada to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam convention.

## DARFUR

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have presented a number of petitions already on the crisis in Darfur. Three other members of Parliament presented petitions on this subject today.

A number of Yukoners have presented a petition that Canada has not adequately addressed the intensified sexual violence, murder and displacement in Darfur. An estimated 10,000 people die every month in Darfur and neighbouring countries. The petitioners call on Canada to provide more military and financial assistance to the UN African mission; to push harder for peace talks; to establish a UN presence in Chad and Central African Republic; to have more leaders of the Sudan government in the Janjaweed sent to the international court; to give more assistance to aid organizations; and finally, to encourage all nations to put diplomatic pressure on China, Sudan's biggest trading partner.

## SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have another petition from Yukoners who say that the SPP represents an unconstitutional attempt to integrate Canada economically, politically and legally with the United States and Mexico into the North American union. This would have far-reaching devastating consequences for Canada. Therefore, the petitioners ask the government of Canada to stand up for Canada and Canadian sovereignty and withdraw from the SPP and determine Canadians' position on it through a referendum.

• (1535)

## HEALTH PROTECTION

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a good number of Canadians. This petition follows on the heels of other petitions tabled in the House pertaining to the direction of the government with respect to health protection.

The petitioners call upon the government to think twice before reintroducing the legislation formerly numbered Bill C-51 which dealt with health protection in areas of food and drugs.

The petitioners are very concerned that the present direction of the government will actually hamper access to natural health products and will not do the kind of job that is necessary when it comes to protecting Canadians from adverse reactions when it comes to drugs, medical devices and food.

The petitioners call upon the government to think twice before going down this path. They call on the government to do something that is right and fair for all Canadians.

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## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, 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.

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## REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

## AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**The Speaker:** The Chair has a notice of an emergency debate from the hon. member for York West, and I would be pleased to hear her submissions on this point now.

*S. O. 52*

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being given this opportunity. I think you are well aware of the importance of the auto industry having heard the questions that were asked today during question period. It is very much a North American integrated industry. Given that beginning next week, on December 2, the United States will be holding hearings and making a decision on exactly what kind of a stimulus plan the Americans will be offering for the auto industry in the United States, it is critically important that they know we are working together as well as they are to try to find a solution. I am quite confident that the government is working toward that resolve.

I think it is imperative that we have an opportunity to have that debate and get the points out there and that we all have a chance to work toward finding a solution. Thousands of jobs have already been lost. We already heard the prediction of another 15,000 jobs to be lost next year if we do not work with the U.S. on solutions to the credit crisis. The auto industry is looking for a lifeline, not a bailout. The industry is in a credit crisis at the moment and is asking Parliament for its assistance.

I believe that Canadians expect us to have issues like this brought to the forefront. I know we have discussed many issues, such as agricultural issues and others, through emergency debates when it was critically important. Thousands of jobs are on the line right now and it is imperative that Parliament be engaged in the debate. I would ask that we have that debate immediately.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for her submissions. I note first in response to her suggestions that it is most unusual for an emergency debate to be granted during the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne since members are free to raise any subject they want in the course of that debate and it is continuing today and tomorrow.

I also note that there will be a special statement from the Minister of Finance tomorrow which may or may not deal with this issue, but will certainly, I am sure, have some impact on it, given the nature of the current financial situation which the minister intends to address apparently tomorrow at 4 o'clock. The House has agreed to a special order in respect of that.

I understand further there are discussions among the parties about the possibility of having a debate on the statement on Friday. I note that Monday is an opposition day for the party of which the hon. member is a member, so obviously the subject of debate on Monday could be chosen to be this one or any other that the party chooses to put forward.

Accordingly, in the circumstances, I am not disposed to grant a request at this time, although I recognize that it is a very serious issue and recognize there are some issues on that point.

*The Address***SPEECH FROM THE THRONE***[English]***RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY**

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today to highlight some of my thoughts on the government's agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne entitled, "Protecting Canada's Future".

It is indeed a distinct honour and privilege to have a seat in Canada's Parliament. I am profoundly grateful for the confidence that has been placed in me by the citizens of Guelph, a city in which one could not be more proud to live. It is a tremendous opportunity and privilege to serve one's own community in public office.

I want to take a moment to extend my appreciation to those individuals who devoted their time, resources and energy during my extensive 82 day election campaign. I am humbled by their contribution and inspired by their conviction.

My family has always been a source of love, guidance and support for me, and I am grateful for, and often feel undeserving of, their continued support. In particular, I want to thank my wife, Catherine, and our children, Olivia and Dominic, for their steadfast love and support as my young family continues along this journey into public life and public service.

In meeting my new colleagues from all parties, I am mindful that while we are divided geographically and politically, we are bound by a desire to serve the citizens of our constituencies and contribute to a better quality of life for those we are entrusted to represent. It is an ambitious goal, one that is essential for all of us to achieve in co-operation together.

I respect that Canadians want a Parliament that will work together to overcome the challenges that are on our doorstep. I have been successfully serving Guelph for 27 years as a lawyer, assisting people through the best and worst times of their lives. I have also had an opportunity to serve my community through many community boards and foundations. The people I have met and the organizations I have worked with along the way in Guelph have always had the foresight and commitment to face challenges, accept responsibility and plan a strategy to move towards a brighter future.

The people of Guelph and I are concerned about, even disapproving of, the Conservatives' lack of vision. In response to calls for economic prudence, we saw the Prime Minister irresponsibly eliminate the \$3 billion contingency fund. In less than three years the Conservative government has become the highest spending government in Canadian history, after squandering the \$13 billion surplus left to them by the previous Liberal government.

The Conservative minority government increased federal spending by more than \$40 billion a year and, despite all respected economists' opinions to the contrary, cut its own vital source of

revenue. In doing so, the Conservatives failed to stimulate meaningful economic growth and failed to be prepared for the slowdown they saw coming.

This economic crisis is an opportunity to embrace and invest in bold ideas and strategies that are going to translate into the jobs of tomorrow. I invite the Conservative government to take a look at Guelph for inspiration.

*Maclean's* magazine consistently rates the University of Guelph as Canada's foremost research university. The university is dedicated to maintaining this reputation through its intensive research-based programs, such as making plastic from non-food agricultural products, plastic that becomes car parts or packaging. Imagine farmers around Guelph feeding cities and feeding raw materials to industry in Guelph and elsewhere. Imagine the benefit for the economy and for the environment.

Innovation is exciting and full of economic opportunity. We need to make more meaningful investments and create strategic partners with those engaged in innovation and research in order to contribute to the kind of growth that will have our economy thriving. Governments need to play a more meaningful role in sponsoring university research and helping turn that research into jobs in Guelph and throughout Canada. There is little doubt that investments in university research yield significant social and economic returns. For example, Canadian economist Fernand Martin estimates that the cumulative dynamic impact of universities' contributions to the economy through research and development was at least \$60 billion in 2007. We need to invest in talent, knowledge and innovation to continue to fully participate in today's competitive global and greening economy.

● (1540)

When I think about the next generation, a clean sustainable environment stands side by side with a prosperous economy. We have a responsibility to be mindful of our environment.

Again, I turn to Guelph for a stunning example of environmental sustainability. Last year, Guelph became a North American leader on energy management with its commitment to a 25-year community energy plan. Through the plan's challenging but realistic targets, Guelph could use less energy in 25 years than it does today, even with expected population growth of 53,000 people, and cut its annual greenhouse gas emissions by nine tonnes per person. This will put Guelph among the top energy performers in the world, reduce our environmental footprint and make my riding one of the most competitive and attractive communities in which to invest.

Liberals have been saying it for years, and I repeat the message at the risk it falls on deaf ears: Sound environmental policy delivers economic prosperity.

*The Address*

We cannot talk about the economy of tomorrow without paying heed to Canada's struggling auto sector. Communities right across this great country were built on the back of a thriving automotive industry. Today, with the industry in crisis, we see communities rightfully distressed about the loss of the good jobs provided through automotive assembly and parts manufacturing plants and the hundreds of thousands of spinoff jobs, from office cleaners to accountants and restaurateurs, to mention a few. It will negatively affect even the charitable contributions made in our communities.

Government has a role to partner with the industry to enable this sector to survive its credit limitations and emerge an industry that is committed to transition to greener and more efficient technologies.

Guelph is an auto town. Canada is an auto country. I call on the government to send a clear message to the industry and Canadians that the Government of Canada stands shoulder to shoulder with our auto industry to protect Canadian jobs.

The people of Guelph are disappointed that the funding promised to Canada's cities and communities has been delayed. Sound infrastructure is the link between healthy cities, productivity and competitiveness. I implore the government to move forward with vital and more meaningful infrastructure investments to create jobs and address the infrastructure deficit.

It is simply unacceptable for Canada to have an infrastructure deficit that exceeds \$123 billion at a time when we are depending on our cities and communities for business growth and development and jobs. Guelph needs more meaningful help to repair its infrastructure, invest in public transit and for affordable housing.

My friends across the floor have asked us for ideas. I invite my Conservative colleagues to meet with me in Guelph and talk to those in the child care and early learning profession. The experience of 35 other industrialized countries, more committed than the Conservative government to early learning and child care, tells us that early learning is designed to take an entire generation out of poverty and into prosperity, better prepare them for the knowledge based economy, help children be better adjusted and less likely to be involved in crime and allows their parents to return to work or pursue their education. The Conservatives' \$100 a month has left Guelph's early childhood education and child care in crisis.

Our children deserve more. I would have thought that my Conservative peers would care more about our children.

I respect the choice that Canadians made on October 14. I look forward to working in opposition to hold the government to account for the commitments it has made.

We need a bold vision that will lead us to a larger, greener economy that will restore Canada's place in the global economy.

We live in a complex, demanding, diverse nation. We govern not only for today, but for tomorrow and beyond.

• (1545)

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member opposite for his comments and intervention this afternoon.

I want to go back to his earlier remarks with regard to the surplus and so-called lack of capacity. I wonder if the member might comment on the fact that Canada, of all the G-7 countries, has the greatest fiscal position and the greatest capacity to deal with this, partly because the government over the past two and a half years has reduced debt by some \$38 billion.

The \$13 billion surplus that keeps being heralded here by the other side has been reduced to put in the pockets of Canadians and help put Canada's fiscal position in a better light. I wonder if the member would not agree that this has improved Canada's position to address the very situation that confronts us.

• (1550)

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right. I do not agree that it puts us in a better position.

If he has seen the reports from the OECD, he will know that Canada is headed for a deeper recession than we predicted and a far deeper recession than was denied by the Conservative government.

Had the Conservatives not squandered that surplus, had they paid attention to where we were headed and had they acknowledged what was clearly in their vision, which was a deficit and a recession, they would not have reduced the GST and we would have been in a better position right now to respond to the needs of all Canadians and respond specifically to those industries that need our help right now.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am little confused when I hear the member opposite talking about fiscal capacity when it was his leader who spoke to the Canadian Club and demanded that the government lower corporate taxes even further than it was planning on in the last budget.

Which side are you on?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would just remind the hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek to address comments through the chair and not directly to the opposite member.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** Mr. Speaker, I am not at all against lowering corporate taxes to spark industry but lowering taxes alone is not enough. Lowering taxes for an ailing industry, all the ailing industries that are suffering right now, would be like refusing to throw a life jacket to someone who is drowning but telling them that if they get to shore they will be treated to a good meal.

I agree with lowering taxes but it is not enough. More must be done and more could have been done had the Conservative government prepared better for this deficit and for what is looming on the horizon.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his maiden speech. I want to assure the people back in Guelph that the member has made an impact not only in a very tough situation in his own riding but an impact already not just in our caucus and as a member of our auto caucus, but in the House as well. He has brought some important issues to the House so early in his career.

*The Address*

We stand in this place and we talk about issues and we debate legislation and bold ideas but it is important that, as members of Parliament, we have an understanding of how these issues impact on the real lives of those back home.

As the member's community continues to wrestle with those challenges within the auto industry, how is the inactivity on the part of the government impacting on those back in his riding of Guelph?

**Mr. Francis Valeriote:** Mr. Speaker, today and yesterday I have been in communication with those who are being severely impacted. Linamar Corporation has already lost 800 jobs. It has had to freeze wages and benefits. I have received letters from dealerships in Guelph that have indicated that the wheels have stopped rolling.

We are getting absolutely no response from the Conservative government. It is not coming at all to the table with a meaningful effort.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on the Speech from the Throne on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Mississauga—Streetsville who I have the honour and privilege of representing in this House.

The throne speech seems to be a product of a government that has no strategy, no plan and no idea of what to do in these difficult economic times. Instead of creating a made in Canada strategy, we have a Conservative-made deficit, a direct result of its ideological cuts.

It is regrettable that the government is offering little leadership or comfort to the millions of Canadians who have seen their savings and their retirement funds evaporate, their jobs disappear and their futures turn bleak. Consumers and businesses alike have lost confidence and trust in the government, and for good reason. They have heard from the Conservatives during the election that running a deficit was something that goes against their core values. Today they are singing from a different tune. It is one of the greatest flip-flops in Canadian history. How can Canadians be expected to trust anything they say?

I was elected to this House by the voters to restore trust to Mississauga—Streetsville. I campaigned as someone who will represent their voices in Parliament, regardless of their race, religion, gender or even political affiliation, to the very best of my ability. I promised voters that I would not turn my back on them as their member of Parliament. The residents of Mississauga—Streetsville elected me to be their voice on matters that are of issue to them, unlike the government that offers a throne speech that is long on rhetoric and short on specifics.

Mississauga—Streetsville welcomes new Canadians from all around the world and helps them successfully integrate with those who have lived here for generations. It is a community that is tolerant, diverse and generous. It has a community spirit that brings out the best qualities in those who live there. With just over 130,000 residents, it is Canada's 12th most populous riding and it is located in the heart of Mississauga, which is Canada's 6th largest city. Mississauga serves as a beacon to the world, shedding light on how people of different races, religions and cultures can live, work and pray together in peace, prosperity and harmony.

Mississauga is also home to 59 of Canada's Fortune 500 companies and sees more people commuting daily into work than commuting out. It is recognized as one of the safest cities in Canada and enjoys a high quality of life, with excellent schools, parks and recreational facilities, and remains debt-free. That is through the sound fiscal management of Canada's most respected, competent and venerable politician who is celebrating her 30th year in office, Mayor Hazel McCallion.

This is a quick profile of my riding and the people who live there, the people I have come here to represent and whose quality of life and generosity of spirit are under threat by the inaction of the government.

Mayor McCallion and her Cities Now campaign has warned that the neglect of our cities will cost our country dearly. It is clear that the throne speech fails to address this issue and leaves our municipalities vulnerable during these challenging times.

We have heard from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that Canada's cities are weighed down by a collective infrastructure deficit of \$123 billion annually. The city of Mississauga alone has an annual infrastructure deficit of \$75 million simply to meet its needs. It has another \$150 million worth of projects on the books that have been moved to its wish list. The municipal tax base is insufficient to fund these capital projects.

Even in my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville, services cannot meet the demand because the city has other priorities to address with limited dollars: subsidized housing, policing, social services, services for the elderly, the disabled, those with mental health issues, single parent families headed by the working poor, and I could go on. Suffice it to say that the government's minimal support of municipalities, which are in fact in the business of fixing potholes, feeding the homeless, giving our youth positive activities to grow and providing services to those in need, is an abandonment of all Canadians looking to their government for leadership. Given the current global economic challenges, such leadership has taken on the greatest urgency imaginable.

● (1555)

As is the case in much of the 905 region, the residents in my riding are forced to cope with the results of the government's failure to lead.

In the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, Canada is the only country without a long-term national transit strategy. Our streets and highways are clogged through much of the workday. Gridlock is costing families precious time. The annual cost to greater Toronto area businesses and to our nation's economy is \$2 billion in lost productivity, while vehicles spew carbon and other greenhouse gases into the air by the ton.

The need for a national transit strategy no doubt seems trifling to the government, but one does not need to be an economist to know that finding efficiencies in our economy is a key element to recovery at a time when the world's economies are failing.

*The Address*

The Canadian Urban Transit Association has estimated that \$40 billion is required for public transit infrastructure in Canada between now and 2012. The funding would serve as a short-term investment in tens of thousands of jobs. These jobs would be created to build and maintain needed infrastructure that would provide capacity in Mississauga—Streetsville, in the 905 area, and in other urban centres to move people and goods that our economy's health depends upon.

This is an economic stimulus that makes sense. Not implementing it would serve to keep our nation's economy lagging.

However, the government has shown its true worth in addressing these issues. The \$52.5 million the government committed in March 2006 toward providing Mississauga's bus rapid transit system has yet to arrive. The provincial government has come forward with its \$65 million contribution, and the City of Mississauga has come forward with its funding for the project. The empty promises and self-congratulatory news releases issued by the government at the time will not keep Mississauga moving. Canada cannot hope to succeed as long as the government continues to believe that photo opportunities are the equivalent of action. Unfortunately for all Canadians, the government shows no sign that it will ever think otherwise.

I am proud of the diversity of my riding, which adds richness and vibrancy to the community. More than 50% of the residents of Mississauga—Streetsville were born abroad, emigrating from 60 different countries and speaking over 90 languages. New immigrants arrive highly skilled, highly educated and ready to work, yet many of these new Canadians face challenges on a daily basis that established Canadians do not. They require assistance to better integrate into the community through language training, affordable housing, reliable public transit and accessible health care.

We need to put a system in place whereby proper credentials from abroad are recognized. Such a system would ensure that we get people working. Rather than invest in newcomers, newcomers who are the skilled, professional workers this country needs to compete and to survive, this government has cut the funding that would help immigrants more quickly and more successfully become productive members of Canada's fabric.

My mother, Veronica Sawarna, emigrated from Poland, along with my father, Michael, who emigrated from the Ukraine. They came to Canada to establish a new life for themselves and their family. I understand what it is like to have parents who are new to this country, as many people in my riding are. The throne speech offers nothing to new Canadians who are key to the future success of this country.

I am a proud Canadian of Polish and Ukrainian heritage. My grandfather served in a Polish division of the French army. He was captured, survived a World War II work camp and was liberated by a Polish-speaking soldier from Philadelphia.

I am proud that my political mentor, Jesse Flis, from the riding of Parkdale—High Park, was also a Polish Canadian and worked hard to fight for awareness of issues affecting the Polish community.

I came to Ottawa to represent the people of Mississauga—Streetsville with honour and integrity. I will work for what I dearly believe in. I want to fix what is wrong to make Canada a better

country and to maintain and improve the quality of life for my constituents and for those dearest to my heart: Brian, my husband of almost 25 years; my sons Alexander and Jonathan; my daughter Natasha; my mother Veronica; and my mother-in-law Flora. I must vigorously hold the government accountable for its actions. I will offer solutions to the issues we face and work toward creating a better country.

● (1600)

The government's throne speech fails in many different ways and in some respects is a direct reflection on its authors. At a time when the world and Canadians are looking for leadership, they are seeing very little from the government.

It is no surprise that having spent the last years emulating George Bush in the U.S. and John Howard in Australia, the Conservatives are bereft of ideas. Their laissez-faire policies of trusting the markets have evaporated. Now it takes leadership, courage and boldness, and we have found them wanting.

At a time when Canadians seek the best in government, they are disappointed. This is exactly how both I and the constituents of Mississauga—Streetsville feel about the throne speech.

● (1605)

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member referred to our government's lack of vision. In fact, almost a year ago this government took unprecedented measures to put about 1.4% of GDP stimulus into the economy. It is one of the reasons Canada was in better shape going into the recession. I would suggest to the hon. member that in fact Canada had it right, and that it is the other countries that are lagging in their responses.

I wonder if she might reconsider that reference to lack of vision.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, I would agree with my colleague across the floor that we have had an incredible lack of vision. It does not take a lot of vision for Conservatives to lead the highest-spending government on record and to have no plan to deal with what they call a pending technical recession.

The government had been warned about the economic slowdown by experts, who argued against their policies. The government failed to act. You have made ideological cuts and you have increased the size of government by 13.8%. You increased the size of government by increasing the size of cabinet, as we learned today.

You ignored all the warnings from all the different economic advisers. All the indicators showed we had the slowest growth in the G8. We lost 200 manufacturing jobs. We have learned that we have lost another 15,000 automotive sector jobs.

*The Address*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will remind the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville to direct comments through the Chair and not directly to other members. I know she is relatively new to the House. It takes a bit of time to get used to.

On questions and comments, the hon. member for Avalon.

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to congratulate the hon. member on her election to this honourable House.

As a former municipal councillor in my hometown of Conception Bay South, I was pleased to hear the member talk about the importance of municipalities and the role they play in our communities and provinces. Municipal councillors are on the front lines of politics in our country. It is they who look after most of the infrastructure, and infrastructure needs are great for all municipalities.

She referred to Mayor McCallion, who is the longest-serving mayor. I wonder exactly what the mayor and her council would suggest as some plan of action for the current financial crisis.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member for Avalon to our team and congratulate him on his victory.

I am very proud to be representing the riding of Mississauga—Streetsville.

There are many lessons to be learned from a mayor as beloved and respected as Mayor Hazel McCallion. She has been serving my great city for the past 30 years and is continually re-elected with 92% of the popular vote. In fact, she was voted number two in the entire world in terms of mayoral effectiveness. She has led through discipline and fiscal prudence. She has kept us debt free. As well, we are one of the safest and most diverse communities, as I have described, and home to many Fortune 500 companies.

She would not squander a budget surplus of \$13 billion on ideological cuts and policies. She would not spend a \$3 billion contingency fund, but would put that money away in reserve for a rainy day or an economic downturn. She would put it away in times of prosperity. She would show restraint by keeping government small, she would not increase the size of cabinet or council, and she would not ignore her economic advisors. She would have a strategy and a plan to implement it.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should know that this government made the gas tax permanent for municipalities. As well, we have the \$7 billion building Canada fund.

However, what I want to talk about is transit. We have developed the public transit fund. There is also the public transit capital trust, the FLOW assistance in the GTA, a transit-secure program that we funded, and a GO trip program to work with GO train.

If she wants to use Ms. McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, as an example, this government paid down debt, debt left to us by the Liberal government. She likes to use the mayor of Mississauga as an example. We have taken that example. We have said debt is a bad thing for this country. It is a bad thing for our future generations, and we have spent money bringing down debt. That is why we think we

are doing the right thing, and we will continue to do the right thing. That is what the voters thought on October 14.

• (1610)

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the hon. member that the \$33 billion building Canada fund has not been moving. Mississauga—Streetsville and the city of Mississauga are still waiting for \$52.5 million to complete their bus rapid transit system.

It is the Liberal Party of Canada that is committed to the cities agenda. We are the ones who recognize that cities are the economic engines that propel our country. We are the ones who are advocating making the gas tax permanent. We are the ones who said we would contribute any surplus toward infrastructure and our cities. We are the ones who proposed \$70 billion worth of investment in infrastructure.

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Burlington pointed out that this government has paid down \$39 billion since we came to power in January 2006. That is a remarkable accomplishment.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to split my time today with the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

It is with great pleasure that I am here today to speak to the throne speech, but first there is something I really need and want to do. It is to give acknowledgement and my sincerest appreciation to all who helped me in this last election and to all who have helped me throughout the last 15 years and the last six consecutive parliaments and allowed me to represent the great area of British Columbia known as the central interior Cariboo.

I currently represent the great riding of Cariboo—Prince George, as I have for the last three elections. That riding's geography includes everything from prairies to mountains to lakes to oceans. It is a pleasure to serve that great riding and the great people who live there. I want to say to all of them, and first of all to those constituents who supported me in such a great fashion, that I appreciate it. I think I received around 55.5% of the vote, which is small by Alberta standards but is certainly good for B.C.

For the first time in six elections, I ran what could be called a textbook riding. I actually had a great campaign manager. We had computers and volunteers all over the place. I decided that after all these years, maybe I had better try what they have been telling me for the last 15 years about how to run an election, and it actually worked very well.

I thank my campaign manager, Tom Newell. He is a great guy. He knows this business, and he is a good friend of mine. I thank my staff, who stayed in the constituency office serving the constituents throughout this whole election and made me look good at that level on a daily basis.



*The Address*

I want to thank all the Conservative candidates across the country, my colleagues who were elected and re-elected, and our national campaign team. I want to thank our Prime Minister for his leadership, his vision and his determination to serve this country, notwithstanding the fact that we were heading into some very troubling times brought on by external circumstances. I know the people of Canada re-elected our Prime Minister because they wanted someone with a firm hand on the rudder as we move our country through these most challenging economic times.

I want to thank my wife Annie, my constant companion. She was my scheduler. She kept me sane throughout the campaign. Most of all, she walked up to the podium with me on victory night for the speech. It was just great.

I am a lucky man to have a great riding like Cariboo—Prince George. Great people live in it. It is humbling to think that they have elected me this many times, and I appreciate it. They are number one.

In addressing our government's Speech from the Throne, I wear a number of hats. One is as the member of Parliament for the great riding of Cariboo—Prince George; one is as the B.C. Conservative caucus chair; one is as chair of our Conservative national forestry caucus.

• (1615)

I have lived in the central interior, Prince George, for about 50 years. This area is primarily a forestry sector area. Living there has given me a broad range of perspective, particularly in the forestry industry.

The forestry industry is a key economic engine for communities in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, for the province of British Columbia, and for the entire country.

Earlier this afternoon, I spoke briefly on how the government has responded to forestry workers and their families in these times of trouble.

It is important to note that even prior to the global economic instability that has now manifested, the forestry industry had already entered into some serious and challenging times. Rising energy costs, damage done by the ongoing seemingly never-ending softwood lumber dispute, which the previous Liberal government just simply could not handle and failed to address, and the devastating mountain pine beetle infestation particularly in B.C., have all created a perfect storm for the forestry industry.

I am so proud of our Prime Minister and our government because we understand that when a mill closes in a town, that closure affects every part of the community, and it has in my riding. Folks have had to rely on the measures that the government has put forward to help them somehow mitigate the economic pain.

That is why we have acted decisively. We have taken measures to help not only the forestry sector but all of Canada's traditional industries, and we will continue to assist these industries. We are taking measures aimed at marketing Canadian products abroad and helping businesses to innovate.

Not only did the government protect Canadian forestry jobs by getting the softwood lumber deal done but earlier this year we created the \$1 billion community development trust to protect jobs and assist communities facing downturns. We worked hard with each province to identify priority areas for action. The community development trust has a lifespan of three years and right-minded communities across this country need it. We provided funding to fight the mountain pine beetle infestation.

Our government launched the targeted initiative for older workers for those who are struggling through these economic times and may be facing layoffs. We have funding available to help them adapt to perhaps losing jobs that they have held for 25 or 30 years. It is really important.

I met with folks from the Forest Products Association of Canada along with a number of my colleagues last week. We spoke about the challenges facing the forestry sector and also about opportunities. With every challenge there comes an opportunity.

Earlier this year in the report that came out of the natural resources committee, FPAC and members of committee were able to identify opportunities. Perhaps that is why we had such a great report come out of that committee, and it was a unanimous report. We all recognized that while there were challenges, there were also opportunities. We need the government to put initiatives forward that would let us take advantage of those opportunities in the forestry sector.

Our government is looking to the future by investing in innovation; creating new market opportunities, such as the world-wide promotion of wood products from Canada; and cutting corporate taxes so that our mills can stay competitive. We brought in the accelerated capital cost allowance so mills can upgrade to new, environmentally-friendly technology.

As I said earlier, the Conservative government is providing support, support in the short-term, but we are also providing things that will fix the problem in the long-term. It is important that we do that.

• (1620)

As the Minister of Industry said, a ready, fire and aim program is not what a Conservative government is all about. We are doing a number of incredible things that will help the forestry industry in Canada. All of these things are the reason why, in the last election, Canadians gave our party and our Prime Minister a huge mandate to govern in the way they wanted us to govern. They have confidence in us and that is why we are on this side of the House.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, let me congratulate the member for Cariboo—Prince George on his re-election. It is nice to have him back.

I want to clarify the record. When the hon. member talked about a huge mandate, two out of three Canadians did not vote for that party. The circumstances were that the Conservatives increased their number.

*The Address*

I was pleased that he talked about the forestry industry. It is obviously an industry that is very important to him and his riding. For those who are not aware, and I know most members are, I had the privilege of chairing the committee on international trade, trade disputes and investments for Canada. We did the review on the specific issue of softwood lumber.

I know the hon. member did not sit on that committee, but for the record, all the stakeholders in the industry right across the country came before the special committee and said how pleased they were with the government's support. All they were asking for was some more financial support, because the final ruling was just around the corner. Everybody on the committee, irrespective of party affiliation, were prepared to support them. Unfortunately, an election occurred and it never happened, but that report was issued.

I have a question for the member. He talked about the \$1 billion fund. Can he go on record right now and say that his community has received a portion of that \$1 billion that was committed by the government to help that community?

**Mr. Richard Harris:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just said it, the Liberals were working on it when they were in government, but they never got it done. That is another example. They were in power for 13 long years and there were so many things that they did not get done. We came to power in January 2006 and it was not more than 30 or 40 days when we did get it done. We got the softwood lumber deal signed.

I know there is not a lot of love for the Americans on that side, nor down where the NDP members sit, but I am really surprised by that complete contrast. The Liberals did not like the softwood lumber agreement. Surprisingly, the biggest fans they have for wanting to scrap it now just happen to be the big mill owners in the southeastern U.S. It is funny that they should climb into bed with the big U.S. lumber consortium in a coordinated effort to try to scrap the softwood lumber deal.

The community development trust is doing a good job across this country. It is targeted to communities that are dependent on industry. In my neck of the woods, it is the forest industry communities that like it.

• (1625)

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate my colleague on his successful re-election to the House, now over 15 years representing the good folks in Cariboo country back in British Columbia.

I am sure he is sitting here thinking that over the last couple of years particularly he is glad that he is on this side of the House rather than being on the Liberal side of the House. The Liberals clambered for the return of money for the softwood lumber mills and then they voted against the softwood lumber agreement that brought that money home. They clambered for millions for the pine beetle issue and then they voted against it on that side of the House. They clambered for a long term strategy for the forestry industry and then they were forced to vote against those types of things, or they clambered for more money for the port of Vancouver and then voted against it.

Can the member talk to us a little bit about what the future looks like for British Columbia because of the measures of the government?

**Mr. Richard Harris:** Mr. Speaker, by contrast to some of my Liberal friends across the way, and in particular, the leader of the NDP, I want to say clearly that for the forestry industry in Canada, the sky is not falling, honest. I say that with emphasis to the leader of the NDP who believes that if we do not have a day with doom and gloom, it is just not a good day.

The sky is not falling on the forestry industry. If we talk to the leaders in the four sectors, the Canfors, the AbitibiBowaters, the West Frasers, the Forest Products Associations of Canada, they know about the challenges we have. However, they will get through this. The mills that have done their due diligence, that have upgraded their equipment, and that have put some money aside will be the ones that come out in the end. They will once again employ tens of thousands of forestry workers all across this country. I say, good for them, and we will help them get there.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on my first occasion in my new role as public safety minister.

Having the opportunity to serve in that role is something for which I owe a great debt of thanks to the constituents of the riding of York—Simcoe. It is a magnificent place, a horseshoe around that jewel of Ontario, Lake Simcoe, around its south end that so focuses our lives. There are beautiful communities in Innisfil, Bradford West Gwillimbury, King, East Gwillimbury, and of course my own home in Georgina.

Thanks to those constituents, I have had the opportunity now to serve in three Parliaments, in roles as leader of the government in the House of Commons, the unlikely role of minister for sport for a short period of time, and now as public safety minister.

The public safety role is a great role for someone who represents York—Simcoe because citizens of York—Simcoe, my residents, are concerned about the kinds of issues that the public safety minister has to deal with. When a community is safe and its citizens have the opportunity to prosper, and they are secure socially, economically, culturally, they can flourish. Safety and safe communities are what come first to allow all those other things to happen.

That is why our government is taking steps to keep Canada safe. We wholeheartedly believe that safer communities will make for a stronger and better Canada. Through ongoing efforts in crime prevention, law enforcement and national security, we are tackling crime throughout Canada, whether it is youth crime, organized crime, gang violence or any other kind of criminal activity.

Like many other Canadians, I have been troubled during recent years by the rising problem of violent youth crime. This is also a particular concern to my constituents in York—Simcoe. The increased evidence of youth criminal activity is something that troubles them all. It is something for which we need to have an effective response, and it is something that we committed to do in the last election, and it is an area on which we intend to act.

We have of course taken steps, as a government, already through the development of a national crime prevention strategy, but we also have a youth gang prevention approach. This includes funding to help divert youth from being involved in gang activity and criminal activity, particularly drug-related gang activity.

There are so many young people who represent such great promise for the future in communities all across Canada, young people who have choices to make when they are young, who are susceptible to the kinds of influences that can lead them down the wrong path. We need to provide supports that encourage young people in those situations to seek a more positive path, a role that will last them a lifetime, serving society in a positive way and serving their communities in a better way.

We will continue to do that. We will strengthen our efforts on youth crime prevention and gang diversion as we have done in previous governments. It is one of the priorities I am looking forward to as we hold out a helping hand to make sure that we do not just focus on punishing violent youth crime, which is important, but also on preventing those crimes from ever even occurring.

Organized crime is another area that continues to be a challenge in Canada. We have taken real action with things like our tackling violent crime bill in the previous Parliament, mandatory prison sentences for those who are committing offences with guns. However, there is still a lot to be done.

The other thing that is happening with organized crime is that it is changing, or society is changing it. Organized crime is taking advantage of the world of the Internet, the more complex society we live in to intrude into new areas, inventing new crimes that never even existed before, ones that require greater sophistication.

We need a response to those because that kind of criminal activity affects families, it affects businesses, it affects our citizens' possessions, their health, their bank accounts and their prosperity. We must develop effective responses. We tried to get a bill involving identity theft passed in the previous Parliament, to actually make some of those things crimes.

Unfortunately, we did not have the kind of co-operation from other parties to deal with them in that Parliament. We hope to move forward on that front and a range of other fronts to tackle organized crime and protect our citizens from these new sophisticated criminals they face.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

We must not forget, however, that Canada is a country founded on many traditions. Our justice system is based on the rule of law. Our institutions are based on the principles of transparency and accountability. Canadians value their personal freedom and civil rights. That is why our government has committed to explaining how it intends to strike a balance between managing new national security threats and challenges on the one hand, while on the other hand, meeting the requirement for accountability and ensuring the protection of civil liberties.

National security is not limited to ensuring the physical well-being of Canadians. It also means securing our prosperity and preserving

### *The Address*

freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. I therefore look forward to issuing a statement describing the government's approach to matters of national security for all Canadians.

[*English*]

In the portfolio of public safety, we have responsibilities for law enforcement, through the RCMP and other areas, for Canada's national security, including through the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. We are also responsible for the prisons and the National Parole Board and all those associated elements that are important to protect our community and rehabilitate prisoners and ensure that our communities are kept safe from criminals.

The border represents another area of responsibility through the Canadian border service agencies and related matters and there is the whole question of emergency services and public safety related to national emergencies. When we look at all those, we can see that there are numerous issues that touch our lives in very real ways.

I talked about technology a bit with regard to organized crime. I expect we will see our government moving on the areas of Internet fraud and on areas where we need to take more decisive action where technology allows criminals to engage, for example, in the sexual exploitation of children. Right now, our law enforcement agencies do not have the tools they need to effectively protect Canadians and young people from those criminal threats. We will take action to try to address those issues so our law enforcement officers have the tools they need to combat crime and protect Canadians.

I also want to see further results in the area of our prisons and parole and how we deal with our criminals in that realm. Our first priority has always been to keep communities safe. We have been doing that as a government and we have been seeing improved outcomes in terms of reduced repeat offences from those released into the community and fewer premature releases. The system will probably never be perfect, but we see opportunities to improve it. One of the most important improvements we have to make is to continue to look for ways to protect and increase the rights of victims of crime. It is only fair that they have a say and an opportunity to participate in decisions that are made on that front.

We also have to ask ourselves if our prison system works as it should. There are populations that are overrepresented in the prison system compared with our broad population. We have to ask ourselves why we have those outcomes. I draw on the preponderance of individuals who face mental health challenges as an example. Why has this happened? What are the roots of that change? We have to recognize that it is a change. It is not something that has always been the case. It is a changing trend.

We also have to ask ourselves if our prison system provides the best support and opportunities to address those issues. That is an area where I want to see some real progress. These are complex challenges that are not easy to address. These are very difficult, complex social issues and we have to make some advances there.

*The Address*

We also need to see progress, and we have an opportunity, one that may be a good-news area for us, on the question of our borders and border security. In 2011 we face what the industry calls a real thickening of the border. The difficulty of a better transition of goods and people across that border is hurting our economy and the American economy. We have to find ways to facilitate the easy transport of goods and people while at the same time ensure that we protect the very vital, legitimate national security interests of Canada and our neighbours. I believe we have an opportunity with the new administration arriving in the United States to take action on that front and work out more balanced and reasonable approaches that will deliver real results.

We are going to work in all of these areas. We are going to work to do what we said we would do. We are going to work to make our communities safer. Tackling crime and ensuring our communities are safer are key priorities we committed in the 2006 election when we were first elected and again in this last election. I am proud to have the opportunity to work on delivering on those commitments to Canadians.

• (1635)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to what the minister had to say. One of the areas I would like to speak about and ask him a question on concerns our treaty exchange of prisoners with China.

China is our second largest trading partner when it comes to foreign trade. We certainly have to look to it to expand our horizons. We not only have to ensure we expand those horizons, but we also need to have more trade to create jobs.

I was saddened when the Prime Minister met with APEC in Peru, that he did not go an extra step and speak to the Chinese folks who were there to ensure we engaged them in more trade.

Canadians are in prison in China. Mr. Jimmy Chen is an individual on whose behalf I have been working. It was an opportunity for the Government of Canada to step in and ask that he be brought back to Canada after it was ordered to do so by a judge in Ontario. We do not have a formal exchange with China.

Would the minister take steps to facilitate, with our second largest trading partner after the United States, an exchange of prisoners with that partner so if Canadians are caught over in China, we can facilitate bringing them back to Canada? Mr. Chen is facing a prison term in China of 20 years and it is time—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, for obvious reasons, I am not going to comment on any individual case that may be the subject of a decision in the future. I can say in general terms that the test we apply, and I intend to continue to apply in my time as public safety minister to the issue of transfer of prisoners, is the question of whether we want to bring Canadians who are convicted of crimes in other countries, sometimes very serious crimes, back here to serve their time within our system. The principal value is one of keeping Canadians and our communities safe. If we believe that in any way there is an undue risk represented by bringing people to Canada to serve out their sentences, then there are all kinds of factors that can play into that. If we believe it is an undue risk to Canadians and their

communities to bring back very serious multiple murderers to Canada, we have to put that test of community safety first.

• (1640)

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will ask the hon. member to hopefully answer a question that I would have liked to have directed to the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George, but I was unable to do that.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George said something remarkable in his speech. He said that the forestry industry was not really in a crisis, that things were not terribly bad.

There was something in the *Vancouver Sun* today, something that we know happened about four months ago. The town of Mackenzie, which is north of Prince George, totally runs on forestry. Every forestry worker, 1,500 of them, is out of work. This town has shut down. The other 4,500 people in the town depend on those 1,500 people for their shops to run as do every other industry.

People are leaving their homes with mortgages on them. These are 55-year-old workers. The whole town has become a ghost town. In Prince George itself, the United Steelworkers Union has said that out of 5,000 sawmill workers, 2,200 have lost their jobs. That is 50% of the workers who are totally dependent on that industry.

What does the hon. member think is a crisis if that is not?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I think everybody is quite aware that there are very difficult economic conditions, particularly south of our border. In relative terms, we are very fortunate that our Canadian economy is much stronger than the American economy.

We have continued to post positive job numbers and economic growth. At the same time the Americans have posted for months and months losses of jobs in the hundreds of thousands and a negative economic growth.

In those circumstances those industries that depend heavily upon export to the United States, especially in growth areas where lumber feeds the housing industry, which has completely collapsed there, will be affected.

We have taken action to do what we can with our community investment trust of a billion dollars earlier this year, through corporate tax cuts and through other measures. Anybody who is being honest with their voters and with Canadians will realize that the Canadian government cannot single-handedly reverse the economic problems of the United States.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join this debate. It is always quite interesting when individual members get up and make their comments. It is like one side sees everything rosy and the other sees everything the exact opposite. The reality is somewhere in between. People have to discuss this with politicians and decide what the difference is between the reality and a lot of comments that mislead Canadians to think differently.

*The Address*

This is my first opportunity in the 40th Parliament to thank my family, my husband, Sam, and all my constituents for their commitment to the political process. Again, if it were not for our families who were out supporting us, I am not sure how many of us would be back. We may have great volunteers and campaign workers, but it is the support from our families and the encouragement we get from them.

Aside from them are our wonderful constituents. The constituents of York West have shown me nothing other than love and respect. This was probably the best election campaign I have ever been through. The weather was wonderful and it was great to knock on doors. I think I knocked on just about every door in my riding of York West and I was received very well. This campaign was much easier than many of the other ones I experienced.

My staff do a great job all through the year. That is what makes a difference at election times. People appreciate the work they do for them. As we move forward in this 40th Parliament, my office staff and I are committed to continue to deliver the best level of service possible. We will clearly be there as we continue on in this Parliament.

It will be an honour to represent not just my riding, but many of the people in Toronto who are working on issues that are extremely important to all of us, to ensure that we work with the government. However, we will also hold its feet to the fire and demand accountability from it as we move forward.

This is the third Speech from the Throne we have had to endure from the Conservatives. It is very much the same kind of rhetoric we have heard in previous throne speeches. Canadians are not third time lucky as they face a very difficult economic reality.

I am sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with my colleague from Ottawa—Vanier. I was very quick to get into the debate and almost forgot my colleague, and I would never want to do that.

These are difficult economic times and the Conservatives are going to have a difficult time dealing with this. It will require all of us to work. The amendment to the throne speech, which the Liberals support, is a commitment that we will work with the government to try to find solutions. We will work in a cooperative manner so our Speaker does not have to rein us in and tell us that we have broken the orders. We will be respectful, as I know he wants us to be.

The laissez-faire, I do not care attitude that we have seen in the past couple of years from the government is clearly something that is very worrisome, particularly as we move forward and try to deal with the economic crisis that Canada is about to face. The numbers are very shocking. When the Conservatives were first elected, they inherited a \$12 billion surplus. That is very different from the time when the Liberals were elected. We inherited a \$43 billion deficit and had to make dramatic cuts.

The Conservatives had a \$12 billion surplus to squander, and they clearly did that. If they had any idea we were running into an economic crisis and had they held on to that surplus, we would have had a cushion, which clearly we do not have now. Instead, in that two years they became the highest-spending administration in Canadian history. Anyone can look it up in the books and see the amount of money spent compared to previous years.

The title of Conservatives somehow gives the impression that they are careful. This government has the wrong title, as it did previously. The Liberals showed what the words restraint and good investment meant, and we managed to do all of that.

● (1645)

The Conservatives made the decision, as well, to leave no buffer, no room to manoeuvre, in the event of a financial crisis.

I must say that I do not think any of us thought we would end up in the economic downturn that we are currently facing, but the reality is that every seven or eight years there will be some sort of financial challenge. No one expected a meltdown but certainly a challenge comes after so many years and we must be prepared for that.

We had a \$3 billion contingency reserve for a rainy day. The Conservatives, however, thought we would never need it so they spent it. Well, they spent it and now we have a rainy day. This downpour needs a lot of money but the money is not available because it has all been given away. The money could have been there to help Canadians create jobs. It could have been invested in the auto industry. It could have helped seniors. It could have looked after our pensions. All of that could have been done without having to go into deficit. Unfortunately, we are in a position now where we probably will go into deficit.

As a result, clearly by their poor management, Canada has entered the escalating economic crisis with one hand tied behind its back. This is because, along with their gross mismanagement, the Conservatives increased their annual spending by \$40 billion over three budgets and then spent a massive \$20 billion in vote-buying schemes in the lead-up to the last election. Clearly, that was money thrown away because it did not work, it did not get them very many votes and they are still in a minority situation. Now, sadly, Canadians must see their country go into deficit because of the Conservatives' fiscal failures.

In this time of economic uncertainty, we absolutely do not need another election next month. The Liberals will be supporting the amended throne speech at the appropriate time and we will work with the government. Our amendment talked about us working together on issues and working collectively to deal with the economic crisis and we will do that.

The NDP can huff and puff and beat their chests but another \$300 million for an unnecessary election in these economic times would be irresponsible. The Liberal Party will not be irresponsible. We will act, as appropriately, in our opposition and we will do our jobs. We will work with the government to point out areas where it can make investments, such as in the auto industry and the forestry industry, and in areas where people are hurting, where jobs are being lost and where we need to do more to help them.

*The Address*

We are calling on the government, though, to move beyond generalities and explain precisely how it will protect Canadians' jobs, their savings and their pensions in this current economic climate.

In the fiscal update tomorrow, it will be very interesting to see just where the government's priorities lie and whether it is prepared to do what is necessary to help the many people who are currently suffering out there. Frankly, we are not holding our breath because we do not know if the government has a plan and we do not believe it has one.

Rather than cutting the GST, one can imagine what that money could have done to support the many seniors out there who are struggling on a limited income. Instead of a \$6 billion cut to the GST, the Conservatives should have put that money into the guaranteed income supplement plan, as the Liberals did many times by upping that and increasing it so that our seniors would have a better quality of life. That would have been a big help to them and it would have helped them through difficult times.

One of the things I would like to see the government work on in this session of Parliament is changes to the Canada pension plan survivor benefits. As many members will know, the Canada pension survivor benefits only cover 60% of a contributor's retirement pension. Therefore, if the surviving spouse or common-law partner is not receiving other CPP benefits, he or she gets 60%. Once someone has lost his or her spouse, the surviving spouse still has the same heating bill to pay and the same taxes to pay and they do not decrease just because a person loses a spouse. These things are plunging many seniors into poverty.

Many issues out there must be dealt with, such as social infrastructure, as well as the hard infrastructure. We need to invest in our cities but we need real investment. We need a real commitment, not just a lot of talk about doing all kinds of things. We need to look at where the money is actually being invested in infrastructure and in the other parts. We do not need to hear announcements and then never see the money delivered, which is what the government has done far too many times.

• (1650)

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for York West on her re-election win.

The member talked about some of the measures that were taken in the last Parliament. I would just remind her that the measures we took, in terms of this 1.4% of GDP stimulus in the last year, helped to put Canada in a much stronger position and that these were permanent measures, unlike the kind of bailout measures we are seeing in other countries, permanent measures that will continue to provide stimulus in the economy.

I wonder why it is that she continues to frame this notion of a \$13 billion surplus, which we admittedly put back in the pockets of Canadians, why would she not admit that that being part of that stimulus, including the \$38 billion in debt reduction, has put Canada on this stronger footing so that it can get in front of the very difficult economic circumstances we find in front of us.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between the ideology of the Conservative government versus how we think as Liberals. We believe in investing in people and ensuring that a \$13

billion surplus is spent carefully and not squandered by just throwing it away. I never supported the idea of \$100 a month going to child care. If that money is invested in something permanent it will provide opportunities for families to move forward.

That surplus could have been used in many ways but instead it was literally squandered, which is what I gather the economist in the Prime Minister believes is the way to do it. I hope we will not use that kind of stimulus for the economy to bail us out. We do not want to do what Bush is doing, which is sending out a cheque thinking that people will spend \$500 and it will solve all their problems. The reality is that we need to invest in industries, like our auto sector, forestry, infrastructure, and create jobs.

• (1655)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am somewhat confused. I am listening to the members on the opposite side of the House talk continually about this \$13 billion amount of money that they hoarded in Ottawa when the provinces were living on their credit cards.

As a member who represents an Ontario riding, where was she when the province of Ontario and all the provinces were crying out for money to put in place the structures for hospitals and for our post-secondary education? Where was she advocating instead of keeping this money in Ottawa? It does not help the provinces.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Speaker, a lot of money was sent. The \$13.2 billion came as a result of good management on this side of the House. That is clearly what it is because we know how to manage the finances. We know how to ensure we are investing in the things that will create positive revenue that will be reflected all across this country as we move forward.

We were the only government in the history of the G-7 that produced seven consecutive surplus budgets. We always made sure that we were paying the debt, that we were working with the provinces and that we were always ready for a rainy day so that we would have a cushion to ride through difficult times, which is exactly where we are about to head now, except that now we do not have a cushion. There is no rainy day fund at all.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was a municipal councillor prior to her arrival in this august chamber and, as such, would know, quite intimately, how the Conservative Ontario government, involved with the current finance minister, sold off Highway 407 to the detriment of the people of the GTA. Now we have permanent gridlock in the GTA, in part because one road is a toll road and another road is not so the non-toll road gets jammed with traffic and the toll road does not.

I wonder whether the hon. member could comment on this foolish notion that the finance minister is flying, which is that we should sell off assets in order to pay for their foolishness.

*The Address*

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Speaker, it sounds very much like Mike Harris days. I guess we should not be surprised given the fact that several of the major ministers in the current government were all part of Mike Harris days and made the kinds of cuts to Walkerton that created tremendous illness there, and in a variety of other areas, such as selling off Highway 407 and the real assets. I expect the next thing we will hear is that it has sold off the CN Tower because, as history shows, the Conservatives are poor money managers. Every time there is a Conservative government in power, we end up in a huge deficit and it is the Liberals who must clean it up.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.)** Mr. Speaker, as most of my colleagues have done, I would like to begin by thanking the people of my riding, whom I have had the honour of representing in the House of Commons since 1995. On October 14, the voters of Ottawa—Vanier gave me a sixth mandate and I am very grateful to them for this. I am also grateful to the hundreds of individuals who have been involved in the campaigns of candidates of all parties who were vying to represent the riding. The involvement of those several hundred people has contributed to a healthy democracy. I salute them for the sacrifice of their time, their energy and their funds to ensure that the democratic process is indeed operating properly.

During those 37 or 38 days of campaigning, we had the opportunity to debate national issues, of course, but also some local ones as well. Among them—issues which I will have the opportunity to defend during this 40th Parliament—is one in particular that I would like to mention now. I have in fact already presented petitions on it since the start of the session, the fifth one today. It concerns the possible construction of one or two new bridges in the national capital region. As a result, heavy truck traffic could be taken out of the downtown area of the national capital and directed toward established and developed communities. The solution put forward by the consultants or experts and chosen by the National Capital Commission (the NCC)—at least until proven otherwise—would prove disastrous because it would merely transfer the problem to long established and well developed communities. A far more attractive solution is available to the NCC and I hope that it will select a better solution guided by the wisdom of those advising it. We will have an opportunity to revisit this issue.

There was also much mention made of the behaviour of the members of the House of Commons. That is why, on the first day of this 40th parliament, I let my name stand on the list of candidates for the Chair. I felt that it was important to focus on the desire expressed by voters for better behaviour from us all. Naturally this is a responsibility we all share, including whoever is in the Speaker's chair. I am pleased that all candidates for that position, and all party leaders in their congratulations to the winner, repeated that same message and that our Speaker acknowledged that he himself bore part of the responsibility.

Finally, and we will have an opportunity to revisit this later, I raised the need to start the planning immediately of the events to celebrate the 150th birthday of our country in 2017. I know that we are moving into a period of downturn, of instability and of political difficulty, but a brighter future is coming and it is up to us to start planning right now for this great celebration of 150 years of Canadian federation. We will get back to this.

The throne speech has some good points, I have to admit, and some bad points—I hope the members opposite will acknowledge that—and it is also missing some things. There is no mention whatsoever of seniors or fighting poverty. The throne speech is also silent on Canada's linguistic duality, and I know, Madam Speaker, that you are sensitive to this. If the throne speech reflects a government's commitment, then associations across the country saw the government's lack of commitment on this issue.

I have to say that the government did redeem itself somewhat last Friday, when it rejected a decision made by the CRTC in August. At the time, the CRTC did not grant any licences for French-language community radio in our region, but did grant two licences for English-language radio. I have already congratulated the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, who made the decision to refer the matter back to the CRTC so that it could do its homework a bit better and take into account the Official Languages Act, as we amended it in 2005.

• (1700)

We will see what happens.

Among the good points in the throne speech, I would like to mention the move to recognize newcomers' foreign credentials, the reduction of interprovincial trade barriers—having been the only minister responsible for internal trade, I can say that there is much work to be done on this front, and I wish the government well—help for certain industries, investment in research, banning of bulk water exports and, naturally, the much stronger focus on food safety. I believe that all parties could support these measures.

There are also bad points. I must admit that I have a great deal of trepidation about the government's planned justice bill. We will see what it has in store for us. The government's environmental track record is not exactly outstanding, and some of us may have concerns about initiatives involving the private sector.

The throne speech focused mainly on the economy. I believe that the government has a duty to stimulate the economy, especially in anticipation of the recession that is on the horizon—if it is not already here—and the deficits that, sadly, will come far sooner than they might have, as my colleagues have said. Still, I believe we will need to go beyond this.

• (1705)

[*English*]

We will need to go beyond this need to stimulate the economy. We will have to at least look at the very structure of how we operate in terms of debt accumulation. Right now we and others around the world are dealing with the debt problem by adding more debt. At some point that whole house of cards is going to come crashing down.

*The Address*

We need to collectively engage in a debate about what growth is sustainable, what level of debt is sustainable and how we achieve savings. Right now, Canadians basically are not saving at all. The Vanier Institute, if I am correct, has determined that 131% of a family's disposable income is spent. If 131% of a family's disposable income is being spent annually just to keep the family's standard of living where it is on average in Canada, it means that family will keep on accumulating debt. That is not a sustainable position.

In the same way, the last time Canada faced a recession, in the early 1990s, Canadians were saving at a rate of about 10%. Today we are hardly saving at a rate of 1%.

How do we dig ourselves out of this hole? Governments will have to provide incentives, will have to provide encouragement and will have to show the way. That is the reason for the reluctance of going into deficit. It was a Liberal government that got us out of deficit in the 1990s and it was not an easy thing to do. We had better start planning an exit strategy right away as well. These are matters that have to be addressed.

There is another matter in the Speech from the Throne that is of great preoccupation locally. I will quote a very innocuous paragraph. It is in English on page 10. It states:

Fixing procurement will be a top priority. Simpler and streamlined processes will make it easier for businesses to provide products and services to the government and will deliver better results for Canadians.

I have to take exception to that. One area in particular is information technology procurement where there has been serious talk of bundling all contracts so that only large contracts would be given out, or perhaps one large contract, of \$1 billion plus over a period ranging up to 20 years. If we did that, basically we would be freezing out 5,000 small and medium size enterprises in this area alone, let alone the rest of Canada. That is the wrong way. There has been no case made, or presented to this House at least, to justify this. I know it is the large corporations that are lobbying for this, obviously.

If the threshold to bid is \$1 billion or more, then obviously the small companies will all be frozen out and I think our economy will suffer. It is very well known that it is small and medium size enterprises that are the backbone of our economy and we should be very careful about how we deal with them. That is one issue that I promise constituents I will be getting back to, because I think it is the wrong approach.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member made a very pragmatic speech this afternoon. His intervention really hit on some important themes.

I was interested in his comments about the notions of how to deal with stimulating the economy. My colleague mentioned, for example, the difficulty in taking a country out of a prolonged period of deficit. There is no question that Canada has learned from the lessons of the 1970s and 1980s.

Considering that this government in the past almost three years has reduced debt by some \$38 billion, would my colleague not agree that we are in a position to move ahead and put stimulus into the economy? Would he not consider that a balanced budget at all costs would also not be the right way to proceed?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Madam Speaker, I did not suggest that we should have a balanced budget at all costs. I did acknowledge that there may be a need for such a stimulation to the economy that we would get into a deficit situation. However, I believe also that if that is the case and that happens, we must collectively already have prepared the terrain to get out of the deficit situation.

Therefore, there is a need perhaps to spend on things that are not recurring, such as infrastructure. If we do that, and it seems that we are going to, let us not forget that there are many kinds of infrastructure spending. Let us not neglect the cultural side and the sports side. These should qualify as well. If we do that, then it is not recurring.

The greatest challenge will be to make sure that we do not get into a deficit situation where we are using deficit funding for ongoing operational needs. If we do that it will be difficult to get out of that deficit situation later on.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Madam Speaker, first of all I wish to congratulate you. That chair is rarely occupied by a woman. In my opinion, it is in the best interests of this chamber for a woman to take the chair. Perhaps this change will induce better behaviour in our debates.

I would like to ask my colleague for Ottawa—Vanier the following question. We just wrapped up an election campaign during which his party and mine were very critical of and analyzed in detail the Conservative position on the fates of seniors and young offenders, the decision to make cuts to culture, and others. We felt the same way about many issues, but the Conservatives just dug in their heels. I believe that a certain number of Liberal members were elected under the same banner—their position was similar to ours.

Can he explain why today he is being so conciliatory with respect to this throne speech, why he is so sympathetic to this speech and why he is even preparing to vote for an policy contrary to their arguments during the campaign?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The member for Ottawa—Vanier has one minute to respond.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Madam Speaker, I can answer that quite easily.

First, more Conservatives were elected and so they have formed the government. I must say that, frankly, I have absolutely no desire to see Canada go into another election, and I think that 98% or 99% of Canadians would agree with me.

Although I intend to support this Speech from the Throne, I am telling the government that it cannot assume that it always has my support or that I will support all the bills it introduces. You and I agree on the subject of young offenders. If they plan on throwing a 14-year-old in prison for life, there is no way that I could accept that, and I will vote against it. I feel the same way about a number of other initiatives.



*The Address*

The Speech from the Throne is an overview. Since it is an overview, I can cut the government some slack, but with enough rope, it may hang itself yet. We shall see. However, we definitely have no intention of provoking an election. If my Bloc colleagues would like to bring on an election, that is their choice, but I do not think that Canadians would be happy with them if they did. I hope that we can let the government do its job—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona. I would first like to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker, as well as congratulate all new members who are sitting in this House for the first time. I too consider it a great honour to be a newly elected member.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents in Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing for placing their trust in me, and choosing me to represent them and defend their interests.

I should also take a moment to thank my husband, Keith, and my children, Mindy and Shawn, for supporting me throughout this journey that has led me to Parliament. I would be remiss if I did not also thank my mother, Simone Pitre, my six sisters and my brother, who never stopped encouraging me.

[*English*]

It is also important to recognize and thank the families of all MPs for their understanding and patience. There are often missed birthdays, anniversaries and other special days for the families of these members, and I want to go on record to indicate how much I appreciate their sacrifice.

During the election, when I travelled across Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, I was able to meet many of the people for whom I now work. In talking to them, I heard time and again that people are worried about their jobs and the high cost of living. They are worried about their pensions and about not being able to send their kids to school. As I listen to my colleagues speak, I can see that these are universal concerns. These are difficult economic times for all Canadians, my constituents included.

The people of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing are hard-working, and when they cannot work, they want to be treated fairly. They deserve an employment insurance program that works for them and is not just a cash cow for the government.

Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing is a big riding, and members may be aware that there is not a lot of public transportation. Things that many Canadians take for granted, like the ability to get to work or to a doctor's appointment, can be a big deal for many of my constituents. They rely on automobiles to get around and are subjected to higher gas prices than those in major centres. This is not right. It is hardly fair. The people in my riding have noticed this and they have told me how they feel about it. I have raised it in the House already and I will continue to do so until there is fairness for northerners at the gas pumps. It is too vital a component in our economy to be ignored.

I will turn my attention to the throne speech and the reasons why I will join my New Democrat colleagues in opposing it. After the election and the many assurances from the Prime Minister, Canadians were looking for an effective action plan from the government, but they did not get it. Canadians are looking for hope, for economic security, and they are not receiving it. They are looking for leadership and a plan that will guide us through these tough times, and they are not finding it, not from this government anyway.

However, there is hope. New Democrats have come up with a plan that would keep people working and help those people who want to work find jobs. Our five point plan is designed to help people in all regions and occupations.

First, the government needs to create an economic stimulus package to help protect and create jobs. These are not just jobs in major centres. New Democrats feel the north requires the same opportunity through economic stimulation, if not more. I might add that an economic stimulus will have to flow through aboriginal communities as well.

Where is the money for training and education in these communities? If we want people to work, we have to help them develop the tools to work. We want to see the children in aboriginal communities receive an education on a level playing field when compared to the opportunities available for children in cities and towns across our country, and right now that just is not happening.

Instead, what we see from the government is zero dollars for the integration of technology in schools, zero dollars for school libraries, zero dollars for vocational training in secondary schools, zero dollars for extracurricular sports and recreation activities, and zero dollars for providing students with a diversified and stimulating curriculum such as studies in sports and art. That is a lot of zeroes.

There are consequence to this oversight as well. Because of all of those zeroes, first nations schools are unable to provide competitive salaries and working conditions. Band councils must choose between vital services, making agonizing choices and cutting elsewhere. Worst of all is the inability to provide young people with a quality education, the kind that every child in Canada has the right to expect.

I am proud to have been named my party's associate critic for aboriginal affairs, and I look forward to working with first nations and the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan to make sure the government comes to recognize the good work that can be done if it makes our first nations people the real priority.

*The Address*

We also have to make sure our forestry sector is working. New Democrats, especially those of us from northern Ontario, are worried that the government does not recognize the need to preserve our forestry sector. In northern Ontario, entire towns have been dealt severe blows when a mill closes. Some towns in my riding still have their mills going, but these towns are becoming something of a rarity, and that is just not right.

Second, we need to protect the pensions of those hard-working Canadians who built this country, those Canadians whose shoulders we stand on. We need to ensure that their pensions are protected and that they never again slip into debt and into poverty.

● (1715)

Elliot Lake is a prime example of what can be done with an aging community. Elliot Lake has reinvented itself as a retirement town. It is a place where retirees can go and enjoy their retirement. Many of these seniors move to Elliot Lake because they can take advantage of affordable housing. Retirees are now the economic engine that drives that community and it is largely thanks to pensions. However, Elliot Lake is dependent upon pensions that pay out. Where is the protection from the government for retirees and those who are still working and dreaming of their retirement? It is just not there.

Third, we need to immediately suspend the \$7.3 billion corporate tax cuts scheduled to take effect in 2009. It seems ludicrous to give away billions more to profitable corporations while the rest of the economy suffers. Let us face it, the oil companies are not going to leave if we do not give them a few billion dollars in tax breaks. They are going to keep right on drilling. It is money we cannot afford to give away right now, not when we are heading toward deficit budgets.

Fourth, we want to see concrete steps taken to fight climate change. New Democrats see climate change as both a legitimate threat to our prosperity and a golden opportunity to reinvent our economy. By creating green collar jobs, we have the potential to help solve both our problems simultaneously: the economic crisis and the climate crisis. It is not difficult to imagine Canada being a leader on the world stage with our transformation to a green energy superpower.

Fifth, we need to bring in meaningful democratic reform and a more open, accountable and co-operative minority government. There is currently a democratic deficit in our country with millions of Canadians feeling left out of our electoral process. One only has to look at the dismal rate of voter participation to recognize that there is a problem. It is a trend that grows from election to election. Canadians are weary of our current electoral model and with the behaviour of those whom they elect to represent them in this very House.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

The New Democrats are eager to work with other parliamentarians so that the House can work meaningfully. We want to ensure that Parliament works for all Canadians, and we are therefore determined to work with the other parties and propose a program that has a good chance of helping Canadians avoid the worst of this difficult economic situation. We want to offer Canadians the hope that better

days lie ahead and that they do not have to worry about their pensions or their jobs, about health care or the environment. They want to believe that they can count on us to defend their interests, the interests of ordinary taxpayers, rather than those of shareholders.

The people of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung can count on me. I will be tireless in my efforts to voice their concerns in this House, as well as the concerns of the millions of working families who voted for the NDP. In these uncertain times, middle class and working families can rest assured that our team will make their interests our priority. That is why the people of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung voted for change, and I will not disappoint them.

[*English*]

I could think of no better gift, on this my 50th birthday, than for the government to adopt the five points that New Democrats are proposing. That would be a gift for all of Canada.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wish a happy birthday to the member and congratulations on her election.

I was a little confused when the member talked about co-operation and making the House work. I was pleased to hear that at the end because at the beginning I was confused. We know the NDP is not prepared to support this throne speech. As the Liberal team said, there is an amendment because the Speech from the Throne is a general overview but nothing concrete about what the government's intentions are. It seems that if the NDP had its way, we would be in perpetual election mode continuously, which is nonsense. By all means, I am not here supporting the Conservatives, but I am supporting the Canadian taxpayers who pick up the tab.

I have a question for the member. She is the associate critic for aboriginal affairs and I congratulate her for that. She talked about first nations, schooling, training and funding. The Liberal government of Paul Martin had signed the Kelowna accord, which allocated funds and programs to address the concerns of which she is speaking. Her party agreed with the Conservative government that prematurely overthrew that government, and all that money was lost. All those opportunities were lost. What is she going to say to her constituents?

● (1725)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the member that at the time when the Kelowna accord was agreed to, the Liberals were in government. They had many years prior to that to come through on the commitments to aboriginal people, and you failed to do that. During the current election, your leader refused to commit to the Kelowna accord at 100%. You committed only half of the money, so you were not serious.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would remind the hon. member to address all her comments through the chair.

*The Address*

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am a little bit lost because I did not know it was the member's birthday. Congratulations and happy birthday. I am thrilled to hear it. We will not talk about her age, as she has already done that once.

In my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek this summer, as members heard in my statement earlier today, I was approached by many seniors who were extremely upset, in fact in tears, because they were getting an increase in a government pension of only 42¢ a month. Can we imagine what that felt like? Seniors expected more from the government, and they needed more. I would like to know from the member, what was the reaction in her community to this minuscule raise?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Speaker, I can say that in my community the issue of having pensions increased is a big issue. These people are actually living in poverty right now. At a time when all of the downloading by the province happened due to the lack of transfer payments to the province, these seniors are actually living in poverty because of the charges that are being applied to a lot of their services. They are having trouble with affordable housing and access to medical assistance. I would tend to think that we need a review of pensions since we have not had one in over 40 years. We need to increase the pensions for our seniors.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have a quick question. I am continuing along the lines of the previous questions, because I think this is very important. The previous government, like the current one, did not give seniors who were eligible for the guaranteed income supplement the money they were entitled to, simply because the seniors were not informed of their rights. But these people have the lowest incomes and are the poorest in our society.

Does the member not find it shocking that this government, which in the past voted to hand over this money, still did not announce the correction of this injustice in the throne speech?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I think it is disgusting that the government is not stepping up to address the inequalities our seniors are experiencing. Our seniors have faced a number of challenges as of late. They helped build our country, and we must absolutely take care of them.

We would certainly be prepared to support this, and the problem must really be identified. The problem is that the Liberals have always supported the Conservatives in a number of areas.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, let me begin my response to the Speech from the Throne by wishing the hon. member who just spoke a very happy birthday. I request that she save some of her birthday cake for when I am finished.

I would also like to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment. I would like to congratulate all the members on their election to the House. I would like to thank my wife, Clile, and sons, Jose, Kevin and Carlos, for working tirelessly on the election campaign to ensure that it was successful. I would like to thank my

campaign staff and all the many volunteers and especially my predecessor, Bill Blaikie, the former dean of the House, who dragged me out at six in morning to plant gate at various locations, including Revenue Canada and the CN shops.

I would especially like to thank the people of Elmwood—Transcona for placing their trust in me.

Parliament has shrunk the speaking times with respect to the throne speech debate. I reviewed Bill Blaikie's speech from 30 years ago and he referenced that he had 30 minutes. In Manitoba in the last 23 years that I was a member of the Manitoba house we had 40 minute speeches; we have since reduced them to 20 minutes. Therefore, it is going to be very difficult to cover all of the subject matter in only 10 minutes. With that in mind, I have decided to stick with three topics, some issues that I have not heard mentioned by some of the other members at this point that I am aware of.

We enter this House at a time of huge upheaval on a worldwide basis with the economy perhaps in the worst shape it has been since the 1930 Depression. Governments have learned a lot since that time. They know that by injecting massive spending at the appropriate times they can help ease the pain and perhaps even get us through a recession.

There are several ways to deal with the issue. The United States issued cheques, but that really does not work. People simply take that immediate money and buy products that are made in China and it really does not help the economy here that much. I favour an infrastructure approach. I know one can make arguments about it not being immediate enough, but I think that is the way to go. It is investment that benefits Canadians for years to come.

In fact, the balancing of the budget exercise for the last decade, which I was highly supportive of in Manitoba and nationally, has in a way meant delayed infrastructure spending. We have a huge supply of infrastructure catch-up to do and it could not happen at a better time.

In Manitoba we have developed 5,000 megawatts of clean hydroelectric power, which is about one-half of our potential. We export most of it to the United States market because that is where the transmission lines run. They do not run east and west; they run north and south, just like the oil pipelines up to this point in our history. We could develop over the next few years another 5,000 megawatts, or 50% of our total capacity, if the federal government would support an east-west power grid or a hydro superhighway to bring the power east to Ontario and west to Alberta.

On July 3, 2007 the Prime Minister endorsed the plan. In fact he announced a \$586 million payment to Ontario as part of the \$1.5 billion Canada ecotrust fund. We need the Prime Minister to make this project happen so we can build the energy equivalent to the intercontinental railway that was built in the 1800s to tie this country east and west.

I know that members on the government side from Manitoba are highly supportive of this idea and I wish them well in convincing the Prime Minister to take a strong leadership role in developing this east-west power grid.

*The Address*

We can then build in Manitoba the hydro projects and send the power to Ontario so that Ontario can close its coal plants by the target date of 2014. The coal plants have a capacity of about 6,500 megawatts and therefore, Manitoba is in a strong position to help people in Ontario close those plants.

● (1730)

Instead, what appears to be happening, if we read between the lines of the throne speech, and not even between the lines but right in the throne speech, is that Ontario may be developing nuclear plants. The throne speech on page 11 states that 90% of Canada's electricity needs will be provided by non-emitting sources such as hydro, nuclear, clean coal or wind power by 2020.

Why does the government call nuclear energy clean? Nuclear creates radioactive waste that stays deadly for a million years and it has to be transported and stored. I want to know how clean that can possibly be.

To achieve the government goal, we will need between 8 and 14 new 120 megawatt nuclear reactors. Where will these be built? It could take years to get approvals. I can see local residents rising up in protest wherever these plants are proposed.

Unlike the federal Conservatives in Canada, president-elect Obama is tying investment in clean energy to the creation of millions of jobs. He has set a goal of putting one million domestically built plug-in hybrids on the road and has put an emphasis on the need for energy efficiency and, along with electrification of transportation, hopes to get the U.S. off imported oil. President-elect Obama has also said he wants to expand and upgrade the United States' electrical grid so it can move renewable energy to areas of the country where it is needed.

This is the Obama version of the east-west power grid that I just discussed. When will this power grid be built? When will the Prime Minister take a leadership role on this file? I look forward to seeing some action from the Prime Minister in the next few months.

Page 12 of the throne speech refers to increasing incentives for energy-saving home retrofits. Manitoba Hydro has had the power smart residential loan program for many years, which since 1999 has achieved an estimated 374 megawatts in electrical savings. Participation levels are now over 50,000 people. New retrofit loans hit 40,000 recently. The result is \$145 million invested in our homes. Manitoba Hydro is the largest electricity exporter in Canada. Its 2008 annual report shows \$625 million in export sales to the U.S.

I am highly recommending another infrastructure project which directly affects my riding of Elmwood—Transcona. The city of Winnipeg is trying to close the Disraeli bridges, which are a major thoroughfare from my constituency to the downtown area. This closure would be one year and four months long. The residents are suitably outraged that the mayor and council would do this and not listen to the 5,000-plus people who have signed petitions for the addition of a new separate, two lane span to this structure which should be built for approximately \$50 million, according to the rapid transit report of the city of Winnipeg, with costs shared by the three levels of government, which by the way would be about \$17 million for each of the levels of government. This new extra two lane span would be built as soon as possible. Then the existing four lane span

would be closed and would be rehabilitated. The city would not be shutting down an area where 100,000 people would be affected. In spite of the traffic chaos this closure will cause, the mayor has charged ahead and refuses to ask the provincial or federal governments for financial help to prevent the complete closure.

I have received an excellent response on this file from the premier of Manitoba, the President of the Treasury Board, who knows the area very well and has represented part of that area provincially, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, and my colleague, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, whose riding borders mine and will be equally affected by the closure. We have the support of Daryl Reid, the MLA for Transcona, Bonnie Mitchelson, the MLA for River East, and Bidhu Jha, the MLA for Radisson. In addition, we have the support of city councillors Russ Wyatt from Transcona, Jeff Browaty from North Kildonan and Lillian Thomas from Elmwood—East Kildonan, who have all done an excellent job of pushing this issue at city hall.

I call upon all of my colleagues to come together to support a proposal for the federal government and the province of Manitoba to offer the city a share of the money needed to construct the extra two lanes.

The Prime Minister announced a \$70 million contribution in June as part of a three way cost share with the city of Saskatoon and the province of Saskatchewan to construct a Saskatoon bridge which is six lanes and will only carry 20,000 cars a day. The current Disraeli, with only four lanes, carries 42,000 cars a day.

● (1735)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** On questions and comments, the hon. member for Mississauga South.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on his maiden speech.

The member talked about the nuclear option for energy generation. In the throne speech the government reminded Canadians that its undertaking with regard to addressing the environmental crisis in Canada is a 20% reduction in emissions by the year 2020. The member seems to be familiar with the nuclear scenario and probably knows that it takes a minimum of 10 years for the development, construction and startup of a nuclear reactor. I am pretty sure that the nuclear option is not going to add very much to reaching the targets the government purports to support.

The government also says in the throne speech that it will collaborate with the provinces because it is the provinces that are going to decide which options they choose for their energy production. Ontario is talking about going to natural gas-fired plants, an 850 megawatt plant in the southwest GTA. The direction in which the province of Ontario is going, as well as the timeline on nuclear, seem to debunk the commitment of the government to 20% by 2020. I wonder if the member has a comment on that.

*The Address*

• (1740)

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, I would answer the question by simply saying that Manitoba has potentially 5,000 megawatts of clean power which could be exported to Ontario to take care of the replacement of the coal-fired plants. This would help the federal government reach its targets. I will point out right now that Germany is exceeding its Kyoto targets as we speak, so this can be done.

I want to take whatever time I have left in my response to finish the third point of my debate which deals with the national securities regulator which was referenced in the throne speech. This idea has been discussed for many years. The smaller provinces have resisted the idea. They see this as an area of provincial responsibility to regulate within their own borders.

Let us pretend for a moment that the provinces give up their jurisdiction and a national securities regulator is formed. Will it be more active than the current Ontario Securities Commission? Let us check some facts.

From 2002 to 2007 the U.S. regulators—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I saw many members stand for questions and comments, so I would like to provide another member the opportunity to ask a question or to comment.

The hon. member for Essex.

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to the member's speech. I congratulate him on his recent election to Parliament. I am sure he is breathing a heavy sigh of relief that he was not in the last Parliament when his leader would have forced him to vote against the ecotrust fund, the \$1.5 billion that this government set aside. The share for Ontario was \$586 million, which was for the stated purposes of retiring the coal-fired generation plant in Nanticoke as well as for establishing some infrastructure for the east-west power grid.

The member is threatening to vote against the throne speech because Mr. McGuinty has failed to act on money we have delivered. Can he explain that to the House?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona has one minute to answer.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, I think the member should talk to his colleague, the member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, who is firmly committed to the east-west power grid. He might be able to explain the issues a little more clearly to the member.

I want to finish my comments about the Ontario Securities Commission and its dismal record in dealing with white collar crime in this country. The U.S. regulators, as I indicated, convicted 1,236 white collar criminals between the years 2002 and 2007. Does anyone know how many were convicted in Ontario over that period? Does anybody want to take a guess? The answer is two. Two people have been convicted.

In fact, Conrad Black committed his white collar crimes in Canada while the Canadian watchdogs were asleep at the switch. It took the U.S. regulators to finally convict him. The Canadian white collar criminals who were running the Bre-X and Norshield scams and

frauds have been given a free pass. Canada does not prosecute white collar crimes, so unless the government intends to hire aggressive—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Resuming debate. The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville.

**Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be standing in this place once again representing the wonderful riding of Leeds—Grenville. I want to take a moment to thank the people of my riding for their continued confidence in me and especially the volunteers who put in many hours to achieve the success that we had. I am aware of the tremendous support and the tremendous responsibility that has once again been bestowed upon me.

In my riding, we can study and understand rural Canada like nowhere else. Words that define the riding include: history, agriculture, manufacturing, industry, culture, security, trade, natural resources, forestry and economic development. History would include such large scale and well-known assets as the Rideau Canal, which is a world heritage site, and Fort Wellington with its own unique story. Just down the road near Kingston is Fort Henry.

Each community in Leeds—Grenville has its own significant historical assets as well, far too many to list. Our agricultural community includes everything from supply managed products, such as chicken, eggs, dairy, to those outside supply management, such as corn, vegetables and beef. Our manufacturing, industrial, forestry and natural resources sectors, although hard hit by global change, as in many other ridings in Canada, are still important employers and producers.

Just last week I attended an important event for a new industrial plant that accepted its first shipment of raw material and will soon have its grand opening. Over the past number of years, I have been pleased to work with and support the UNESCO recognized Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve that is bringing new value and interest to my riding and to those in the surrounding areas. This is all part of the beautiful Thousand Islands.

Despite its relatively small population compared to its size, Leeds—Grenville boasts an expanding and vibrant arts and cultural community that attracts people from a wide area to visit and to work in the riding.

People in my riding are concerned with trade and with security. Much of the manufacturing that takes place produces goods that are shipped outside of Canada. Trade and expansion of trading partners is vital to the continued success of those industries. I have two border crossings in my riding that lead to the urban concentrations of our largest trading partner, the United States. As well as trade, the residents of my riding use these bridges to visit friends and often relatives on the other side of the border. Security and open borders are important to Leeds—Grenville.

*The Address*

Finally, especially in these times of economic change, the riding relies on continued sustainable, innovative economic development and this development has been supported in the past by the federal government through the work of the Community Futures Development Corporations and by FedNor.

The final ingredients in the riding are the ones that make it a truly unique and remarkable place, the families who live, work and choose to raise their families there, the seniors who choose to live out their golden years in our paradise and the communities that they all foster by being part of the area.

It is because of the support and responsibility that these families, these seniors and these communities have given me, the support and responsibility that I spoke of a few minutes ago, that I was so pleased to hear in the Speech from the Throne delivered by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean just last week. It spoke to the lives, the hopes and the aspirations of the people in my riding of Leeds—Grenville.

In my limited time, I want to touch on some of the elements of the throne speech that my constituents support. During the summer and during the campaign, I explained to my constituents that our government had taken early and substantial action to prepare for the current economic problems because we saw it coming. From lower taxes to incentives for manufacturers, to protection for farmers, to increased trade, to reducing the national debt, there are a number of areas where our government has acted and acted well in advance of this fall's economic meltdown.

The Speech from the Throne pledged to work internationally to reform the global finance system and to work with our allies and trading partners to re-examine and renew the rules that support the global financial system, and they are welcome news indeed.

● (1745)

I know the residents of Leeds—Grenville would like to see Canada share our financial rules with the rest of the world so that the situation can be avoided in the future.

Over the past few weeks, I have been receiving emails and letters from constituents who are concerned about Canada going into deficit. They want a guarantee that large continued deficits such as we have seen in the past are not on the table as a viable option. They are heartened to note that the government has paid down some \$37 billion on the national debt, which gives us the lowest debt to GDP levels in the G-7.

Contrary to what we hear sometimes in this House, folks in my riding are not concerned that the government is no longer racking up \$12 billion surpluses. They know that surplus is merely excess taxation. It is not free money for the government to play with. They know that our government has given these large surpluses back to Canadians in the form of tax reductions and needed services.

They will also be pleased to see that our government is continuing our examination of every government program and expenditure to ensure that we are receiving value for our money and we are spending on programs that make sense for Canadians.

Leeds—Grenville is like many other ridings in the industrial heartland of Canada in that it has participated in the restructuring of

the manufacturing industries. This could be devastating news except for our government's commitment to retraining and helping older workers and younger workers gain the skills they need to move on in the workforce, a commitment that is once again restated in the Speech from the Throne.

The speech also reiterates our government's commitment to the skilled trades with encouragement for workers and employees. We have already taken steps to assist them with tax breaks and we will be taking more in the near future, as we promised during the election campaign.

This past spring and summer, we saw an unprecedented rise in the price of gasoline and diesel fuel, followed by a spectacular fall.

Leeds—Grenville is a rural riding. It is almost impossible to live without a vehicle because public transportation does not exist as it does in large urban areas. Hundreds of people travel every day to get to their jobs. Goods have to be moved from place to place within the riding but they have to arrive in the riding by truck. Many other people work in the transportation industry. In an emergency, we do not talk about being blocks away from a hospital or a fire hall, we talk about kilometres, even travelling to another community.

In short, the cost of gasoline and diesel fuel affects the day-to-day lives of the residents of Leeds—Grenville and they have no other options. That is why the residents of Leeds—Grenville rejected a carbon tax and why the residents of Leeds—Grenville will always reject a carbon tax. Their daily lives rely on gasoline, diesel and other energy.

Residents of Leeds—Grenville are also concerned about energy. They want our energy sources to be secure and they want to be able to budget for their energy use. They want their government to help secure our energy.

The residents of my riding are also concerned about the environment. They do what they can to reduce the amount of energy they use because it is the right thing to do, but there is only so much that they can do on their own. They will be pleased to see that our renewed commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Canada continues. They will be pleased to know that we will work on their behalf to find ways to tackle climate change both institutionally and by finding ways that they can participate and do their part without causing them grave economic distress.

What others do not do, the folks in my riding expect the governments and authorities will take steps to ensure that they can move forward in a positive way. They seem to be happy with what is in the throne speech. Our government has, from the beginning, vowed to keep our country safe by strengthening the sentences in the justice system for serious criminal offences, and I am pleased to see that this was once again restated in the throne speech.

*The Address*

I would continue in much greater detail with my words today but I wanted to express something of the background of my riding, which I think I have been able to do that, and of the people who live and work there and explain why, as hard-working, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens, they and I are supporting the Speech from the Throne.

• (1750)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his return to the House. He truly does represent one of the nicest and prettiest ridings in all of the country. I was in that riding on the weekend as a matter of fact and it is almost as nice as Scarborough—Guildwood.

I assume, because the member's riding is so heavily dependent on tourism, that he must have been terribly upset that the Speech from the Throne did not have one word in it about tourism. Since his riding is so dependent upon tourism, and particularly American tourists, he must have been much more distressed that it did not make one word of mention about replacing those American tourists, who will not be coming back anytime soon, with say Chinese tourists.

He must have been very distressed that there was no mention of negotiating with the Chinese government the approved destination status. In fact, Canada is not even on the negotiation list, although 134 countries have already signed off on approved destination status.

My colleague must find that this Speech from the Throne certainly does not respond to the needs of the people of Leeds—Grenville who are highly dependent on tourism.

Does the member not think that if the Prime Minister saw this economic downturn coming that he was remarkably silent during the election?

• (1755)

**Mr. Gord Brown:** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member upon his re-election also. I am glad he took the time to visit Leeds—Grenville.

I spent many years working in the tourism industry and I know that industry intimately.

I am happy to see that our government is continuing to work on border issues. I know the hon. member is very active on the Canada-U.S. interparliamentary group and that he knows the importance of many of the issues to ensure that visitors can cross the border easily.

In terms of his question concerning the ADS with China, I hear from tourism operators in my riding that the number of Chinese visiting Canada continues to increase.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your position in the chair. I would also like to thank my constituents, who have renewed their confidence in me.

Unfortunately, the riding I live in is not like that of the member for Leeds—Grenville. The member surely lives in paradise. He said so himself. How wonderful it must be to live in paradise, where he is unaffected by things that affect everyone else in Canada. He said that

tax cuts were just fine. But where I live, tax cuts have not created jobs, nor have they helped manufacturers in my riding, Brome—Missisquoi, stay in business. He also said that Canada must avoid a deficit at any cost. However, every time there has been a crisis, governments have resorted to deficits—small ones, to be sure—to get through hard times.

The Speaker is letting me know that I have to wrap things up. I would like the member to tell me why taxes do not affect his riding.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gord Brown:** Madam Speaker, I also want to congratulate the member on his re-election. I am glad he recognizes that I happen to have the honour of representing such a beautiful part of the country that includes the Thousand Islands. I guess he has been a visitor there and I encourage him to go back.

The fact is that this government took action to help companies across the country by bringing in tax cuts before we got into this economic situation. We saw that this was coming and we took action, action that is helping companies across the country to stay in business so they can keep the jobs in place.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am extremely honoured to rise in the House today to speak to the government's Speech from the Throne.

First, please indulge me for a moment while I take this opportunity to thank my family for all their support during this past election, my wife, Carol Ann, and my three daughters, Kari, Taryl, Shelby, and their significant others for providing unwavering support and encouragement.

I want to thank my campaign team, volunteers, the donors and the riding association executive for all the tremendous work and effort they put into the recent campaign.

Most important, I have to recognize and support the constituents of Prince Edward—Hastings and thank them for reaffirming their trust in me to serve as their representative in Ottawa.

Today, when I look across the House, and during QP, I congratulate all the returning members of Parliament and the new MPs. I look forward to participating with each and every one of them as we hopefully put aside our partisan interests and focus on the real priorities that matter to Canadians.

We recognize it is the economy right now, both globally and nationally, and it is a justifiable worry for all Canadians. Our government has demonstrated its readiness by outlining a five-pronged approach for ensuring Canada's economic security, including the reforming of global finance, sound budgeting practices, ensuring jobs for families, expanding free trade and investment and implementing measures to make government more effective.

The Canadian government is providing leadership in the international financial system by proactively putting in place sound practices that have protected Canadians from the worst of the current global economic crisis. The government has done much in the last few years to create solid fiscal fundamentals by introducing responsible budget and implementing significant debt repayment and tax cuts that have helped the average consumer and kept the Canadian buoyant amid troubled international waters.

*The Address*

Going forward, we are and continue to work with the G-20 leaders to re-examine the rules and institutions that underpin the entire global financial system. Our government has stated its intention to also work internally with the provinces to put in place the common securities regulatory.

As the member of Parliament for Prince Edward—Hastings, I am proud and honoured to represent what I believe to be one of the most beautiful ridings in southern Ontario, and there are many. It is an extremely diverse area though for those who have had the opportunity to travel through. We encompass the rural towns of North Hastings, the urban growth of the city of Belleville, the proud home of the Mohawk First Nations people to the rich fertile farmlands of Prince Edward County, or the county as everybody who is there affectionately calls it.

Within the area there exists a microcosm of Canada representing urban development, manufacturing, small business, industry, farming, tourism and first nations.

I will focus on a few of the priorities outlined in the throne speech and the benefits to ridings like mine and others as we go forward building on our last mandate.

I and the government realize that the economy is not an isolated entity based simply on numbers and figures. The economy is based on a real priority, and that is people. As presented in the throne speech, the government continues to commit itself to helping Canadian families, the communities and businesses that employ them.

I have and continue to believe that education is the key to the success of individuals, their families and their communities. The government has recognized this by proposing a new consolidated Canada student grant program to take effect in the fall of 2009. I am also pleased to see that our government is working to ensure aboriginal people have access to the same educational opportunities as other Canadians.

We are also working hard to respond to the needs of farmers. We know that a state of severe economic hardship exists in the livestock, the cattle and the hog sectors and changes are being made to the agricultural act. I believe they are sincerely going to help relieve the situation. The government is implementing its new growing forward programs aimed at building agriculture for the future to support Canada's farmers and the agricultural sector.

A thriving business environment is also integral to our continued success, not only in Prince Edward—Hastings but in the whole country.

Through "Advantage Canada", our economic plan and recent budgets, we have made significant progress toward creating a business environment aimed at promoting long-term investment, innovation and job creation across all sectors of the Canadian economy. Our government has already cut taxes to lower costs for businesses, to help them compete and create jobs. By 2012-13 the Government of Canada will have provided more than \$9 billion in tax relief to the manufacturing sector.

● (1800)

In the riding of Prince Edward—Hastings, owners of small businesses and people in the tourism business in Prince Edward county have benefited greatly from the reduction of the GST.

Through our government's unprecedented building Canada plan, we are providing long term stable and predictable funding to meet infrastructure needs across Canada, realizing that modernized infrastructure contributes to a stronger economy as well as a cleaner environment.

In Prince Edward—Hastings alone gas tax rebates have totalled approximately \$15 million. These are funds that are helping to meet the infrastructure requirements of municipalities across this riding and across the country.

Canada's prosperity depends not just on meeting the challenges of today, but more important, on building the dynamic economy that will create opportunities and better jobs for Canadians in the future.

Our government has stated that it will work with industry to apply the best Canadian scientific and technological expertise to create innovative business solutions.

We have already seen a prime example of our government's commitment in my riding with the biopharmaceutical company, Bioniche Life Sciences. Bioniche received federal funding over the years, including \$15 million in repayable funding loans to help develop a breakthrough vaccine for cattle. It will help reduce the proliferation of a dangerous strain of e.Coli.

As a long-time former business owner, I am very aware of how cost effective business practices are an imperative key to success. I am proud to say that our government understands that and is committed to incorporating modern business practices that focus less on process and more on results while keeping government spending prioritized and under control. Canadian taxpayers deserve nothing less.

Canadian taxpayers also deserve to see the future of our true north protected. Our government is committed to the Arctic and is strengthening Canada's sovereignty and protecting our environmental heritage while taking action to address the unique challenges and opportunities we face there through our integrated northern strategy plan.

This is an issue close to my heart, and in June 2008 I introduced a private member's bill designed to further protect the Canadian sovereignty of the Arctic. The motion asked that the water passage between the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans be simply renamed the Canadian Northwest Passage. This term clearly acknowledges our historic and our sovereign heritage.

The government understands that Canada's economic prosperity cannot be sustained without a healthy environment, just as environmental progress cannot be achieved without a healthy economy. The government has committed to reducing Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and is working with the provinces and our international partners to implement realistic and achievable goals toward that end.



*The Address*

One of the benefits of a secured economic future is our opportunity to become homeowners and to have affordable housing. Our government wants to ensure that. Working through CMHC, we have committed to purchasing up to \$75 billion in insured mortgage pools by the end of the fiscal year.

I certainly remember when Carol Ann and I built our first home. I know it is an exciting time for young couples, and I am pleased to see that our government is committed to helping Canadians realize their dreams can become a reality.

Our government is supporting many Canadians with housing needs and is fulfilling its commitment to helping those seeking to break free of the cycle of homelessness and poverty, and 505 projects across Canada received funding in the amount of \$150 million under the government's homeless partnering strategy. In Prince Edward—Hastings over \$2 million were awarded to contributing partners.

Canadians need to be assured that they are safe in their homes and their communities. We will take tough action against crime and work with our partners. The safety and security of Canadians is of utmost priority and, as such, we will continue moving forward on our tackling crime agenda.

As a member of the legislative committee for the Tackling Violent Crimes Act, I was able to see first-hand the government's commitment to the safety of Canadians. Safety also means national security and our security ultimately depends on the respect for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

We are rebuilding our Canadian Forces. We owe it to our military men and women to make sure they are using effective and up-to-date equipment.

I look forward to working with all members as we strengthen our position and ensure that we as Canadians emerge as a stronger and more united people than before.

• (1805)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Prince Edward—Hastings on his re-election. I do agree with him when he said that it is the economy that is the issue that we are all faced with here in Canada and abroad. I was hoping to hear about measures, and in much more detail, the government is taking to move forward. He and the member for Leeds—Grenville talked about tourism. I want to pick up on that.

I remember when I was parliamentary secretary to John Manley. We brought in the Canadian Tourism Development Corporation. We created it through legislation. I helped pass that bill. What we did is we invested in stakeholders. Our tourism industry was really growing at that time. One of the key elements was the GST rebate for tourists.

The Conservative government came in and eliminated that. Is he prepared, as another stimuli to the economy, to provide some input to the government and the Prime Minister to bring back that program in order to motivate and kickstart the tourism industry? Will he do that?

• (1810)

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Madam Speaker, I actually can speak with a little bit of authority on the issue of the GST rebate. I have been involved in the tourism sector for over 35 years. As such, there are

two elements to this. One is the everyday spending, the \$5, \$10, \$100, and \$200 here and there. Quite frankly, it is cumbersome, burdensome, and not cost effective for the government and/or the people to obtain a \$10, \$12, \$15, or \$20 refund. It honestly does not accomplish the goal. That really did not interest the people.

However, for the major convention traffic, for the major events that take place, yes, the member has a very good point. I do believe the government recognized that through the consideration and the input of all of the members in the House. We brought forward a motion where the major convention centres and the entire convention business would be exempt from GST.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Madam Speaker, could my colleague explain something to me. After the speeches of the last two Conservative members, I believe that they live in ridings that I will say are made of Teflon: nothing sticks in these ridings. Unless I am mistaken, they have been sheltered from the decline in the manufacturing industry and they are also immune to the forestry crisis. Seniors' issues are not a problem for them; they may have seniors but they all have income security and, I imagine, the GIS as well.

I am trying to understand why they delivered such a Speech from the Throne. There is no mention of food banks, to which more and more full-time workers are turning. They seem to be exempt from all this. There is no mention of poverty in general and the poverty of women and children in particular.

Have I understood correctly that they live in a microcosm protected from the poverty and troubles that affect the rest of us?

[*English*]

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that I am not composed of a surface of Teflon. If that were the case, everything would slide off my shoulders. Quite frankly, I take my responsibilities as a member very seriously, and when comments, considerations or issues that matter to my constituents are brought to me and to my attention, I take them to heart and act responsibly. So, I do take a little bit of umbrage to that.

Just to clarify the situation with the hon. member, though I personally was in the hospitality, service and tourism business, that is only a very small portion of my riding. I have 14% to 16% unemployment in the entire northern part of my riding that depends on logging. I have a manufacturing industry in my riding that is also heavily dependent on the auto sector and the parts plants. I have a food industry in my riding that has seen the demise of the canning industry and the vegetable processing industry.

I can assure the member that I well recognize firsthand the problems, and that is one of the reasons I am here to get results for those people and people like them across this country.

*The Address*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour of sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

I am especially pleased to have the opportunity to speak now. Naturally, I would like to take a moment to thank the people of Chambly—Borduas, who elected me for the third time by a margin of over 21,000 votes. I wanted to point that out because they did not just vote for me; they expressed their confidence in the Bloc Québécois, its work here, and the priorities we champion every time we rise in the House of Commons. I would like to reassure my constituents, who placed their confidence in me, that I will work hard on their behalf, just as I promised.

Recent comments made by two of our Conservative colleagues suggest that the throne speech is out of touch with what is going on in most ridings, including their own. My Conservative colleague's most recent remarks reveal that their ridings have the same problems as ours. Yet the throne speech did not acknowledge those needs.

Two-thirds of the members from Quebec belong to the Bloc. Clearly, Quebec voters wanted nothing to do with the Conservatives' proposals. Yet the Conservatives resuscitated those very proposals in the throne speech even though 78% of Quebecers rejected them. In addition to the 49 Bloc members I mentioned, there are also 14 Liberal members and one New Democrat. The Conservative Party has lost a member. If this were a football game—these being the playoffs—the score is now 65 to 10. That is what I call a thrashing.

Quebeckers gave the Conservatives such a thrashing because they wanted nothing to do with the Conservatives' proposals. Yet those very proposals are in the throne speech. The Conservatives continue to make cuts to culture. For Quebec, this represents 314,000 jobs, 16,000 in my own riding. They continue to want to impose a repressive young offenders law. Quebec already has a specific law to prevent crime. They continue to want to create a single federal securities commission. They do not even mention the word “Kyoto”. They continue to want to reduce Quebec's weight within the Canadian federation. They promise to interfere further in Quebec's jurisdictions, such as health and education. There is nothing about the fiscal imbalance. Part of the fiscal imbalance was corrected thanks to the Bloc's efforts in this House, but there is still a long way to go. They continue to want to support nuclear energy and unbridled military spending.

All that is in the throne speech, even though Quebec roundly rejected the Conservatives' proposals. What the Conservatives propose for the rest of Canada is their own business. They have a majority elsewhere. But they did not understand Quebecers' message at all.

We want to be positive. We are going to tell them that if they did not understand, we will come back again with realistic measures designed to work for the regions represented by all the members here. The Conservatives have even strongly encouraged us to give them suggestions. The Bloc has therefore proposed ways of addressing this economic crisis.

• (1815)

We believe it is time to act, and we have the means to act—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I regret that I must interrupt the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

[*English*]

If hon. members would like to hold a meeting, I would ask them to leave the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Madam Speaker, what you have just done sets a good example to follow, and I appreciate it.

So, resuming where I left off, the Bloc Québécois is proposing a realistic plan. It would be a recovery plan over two years, into which \$23 billion could be invested, and this sum can be spent without increasing the interest-bearing debt and also without creating a recurring deficit. These will therefore be temporary measures to get us through the crisis itself.

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

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Madam Speaker, I am going to ask you to intervene again if this continues, because it is hard to concentrate when others are talking like that.

• (1820)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I have asked hon. members if they choose to hold meetings, to do so outside the chamber. It is very difficult for hon. members to concentrate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, the government has, in fact, over \$27 billion in leeway, and \$23 billion of that could be allocated to the economic crisis, and the other \$4 billion—plus several hundred million—to set up a secure reserve fund.

Where would this money come from? First of all, there is the whole business of tax havens. Then there is the business of the oil companies and the privileged treatment they get, as well as savings in the costs of operating the governmental machinery—but with no layoffs.

I will remind hon. members that Ottawa's financial assets, from March 31, 2008 to this point in time, are \$176 billion.

In a nutshell, our plan calls for immediate measures with no cost to the budget, measures for business but also for individuals, as I have said a little earlier.

Now, for the surplus. There is a \$3.8 billion surplus in 2008-09. A \$1 billion deficit is forecast for 2009-10, and a \$4.4 billion surplus for 2010-11. This is worth pointing out so that people know just where we stand at the moment.

*The Address*

The surpluses are spread over three years, and the breathing room which once was \$16.9 billion—essentially, \$17 billion—has decreased to \$7 billion, a reduction of \$9.7 billion. That is basically \$10 billion over the past three years, in part because that the government reduced the GST. The government voluntarily reduced its revenues. We have to start from there.

Bureaucratic expenses could be reduced by almost \$7 billion. These expenses reached \$74 billion given the increases over the past nine years. The additional rules would also have to be applied more stringently over two years.

When it comes to tax havens, we must again look at the tax situation of the oil companies. There is \$6 billion for the next two years. And, as I said earlier, government assets provide significant breathing room in this, as well.

I will stop there, although we could delve even further into the details. If the government had done its homework as it should have, it would have also invested in what I would call the social safety net for the people who are the hardest hit by this crisis, particularly the unemployed—both those currently unemployed and those who will be in the future. And so, we are asking the government to seriously evaluate and analyze the proposal that we have put forward.

• (1825)

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague for the attention he gave to the needs of his constituents during the election campaign. Indeed, the members of the Bloc Québécois are in tune with the people, their needs and their aspirations.

During the most recent election campaign, it was clear that there were considerable needs. Some people really are struggling. The government has the means to fix the situation at this time, just as it had the means to fix it in the past. Yet it did nothing. It ignored the demands of Quebec. It has ignored proposals made by the Bloc Québécois since it first came to power. Essentially, the Bloc Québécois has been one of the best advisors the government has had in this House. And we did not even charge a fee.

I would like to ask my colleague the following. After really listening to all the needs and all the hopes of the people of his riding, regarding the problems they faced, for instance, in the manufacturing industry, perhaps less in the forestry sector in his case, but also in terms of culture, I would like to hear him elaborate on what he learned during the election campaign, although I am sure he probably already knew most of it.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke, who has been, in my opinion, an exemplary member since arriving here in the House. His work with our team and other members of the House has been inspiring. His question is more than relevant.

Chambly—Borduas is all about culture. People from outside the region, who may know just a little about it, can enjoy all manner of artistic expression there. As I said earlier, culture accounts for some 16,000 jobs. For example, we have a theatre company called l'Arrière Scène that specializes in children's theatre. In addition to performing in my riding, throughout Quebec and across Canada, the company even travels around the world, disseminating our culture wherever it goes.

This theatre company has visited every continent, but the Conservative government's cuts will make it impossible for it to perform in other countries. It was scheduled to make appearances in eastern Europe next winter, but now its members will not be able to go because of these cuts.

If every member took the time to look at how these cuts affect their ridings and to talk to their constituents about them, they might be surprised at the impact of the cuts on cultural promotion and how their people tell the world about themselves.

[English]

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I know we have very little time left. I was intrigued by the comments of my colleague across the way and his interest in economic development. However, I wonder why it is that he and his party are not supporting a Speech from the Throne that is in fact affirming support for a very robust economic development agency that is important to Quebec, affirming the many measures that the government has taken to strengthen the economy in Quebec. What he is saying is completely opposed to the direction of the government and I do not understand why he and his party are not supporting this speech.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Madam Speaker, I thought the member understood that we have a very clear mandate to not approve measures that are contrary to public interest or the common good. The measures here do not provide concrete support for regional development based on the realities of each region, unlike what the member is saying. He should think about his own riding and analyze the throne speech. Then he can tell us what concrete measures will promote the economic development of his region in order to save jobs and at the same time, protect those who are most in need in our society. Then he can come back to talk to us.

• (1830)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It being 6:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)



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