



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 3, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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•(1000)

[*English*]

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

**The Speaker:** I invite the House to take note of today's use of the wooden mace.

[*Translation*]

The wooden mace is traditionally used when the House sits on February 3, to mark the anniversary of the fire that destroyed the original Parliament Buildings on this day in 1916.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

### CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the 40th general election held on October 14, 2008. This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to table, in both official languages, reports of the Canada-United States interparliamentary group on the following meetings that were held last year: the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Council of State Governments-WEST: 2008 annual meetings; report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Western Governors Association, 2008 annual meeting; the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the 49th annual general meeting; the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008 legislative summit; and the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Southern Governors Association, 2008 general meeting.

## EXCISE TAX ACT

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-282, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no GST on carbon offsets).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce a private member's bill for the consideration of this House.

At a time when Canadians are trying to lower the negative impact they have on the environment, it is the role of the House and, I would suggest, the obligation for the government to incentivize people to encourage good behaviour. That is why I, seconded by the member for Random—Burin—St. George's, are calling for an amendment to the Excise Tax Act that would offer an exemption to the goods and services tax on carbon offsets.

I believe this would be a good way of encouraging Canadians to reduce their environmental impact and I hope the House will support the bill.

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

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## EXCISE TAX ACT

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-283, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no GST on bicycles).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to table my private member's bill which, I should point out, was tabled in the previous Parliament but died on the order paper. I believe the federal government can encourage people to make these good transportation choices by supporting my bill which calls for an amendment to the Excise Tax Act to eliminate the goods and services tax on the sale of bicycles.

By giving people the incentive to choose environmentally friendly modes of transportation, we will be doing the right thing for Canadians and for the environment. I hope the House will support this initiative when it comes before it for debate.

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

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## PETITIONS

### MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS ON ANIMALS

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present about 50 pages of petitions that were collected by members of the Animal Defence and Anti-Vivisection Society of B.C.

### *The Budget*

The petitioners feel very strongly about the issue that they collected the petition on. They urge the Canadian government to end funding of medical experiments on animals in favour of nonviolent, more appropriate, ethical and reliable research methods that are increasingly becoming available. They also call for greater accountability from publicly funded researchers and higher standards of animal treatment more in line with those of European Union members. I am pleased to introduce these petitions today in the House.

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

#### INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition signed by Ottawa citizens. It deals with the construction of a bridge and the eventual elimination of heavy-truck traffic in the downtown core of the nation's capital. These petitioners call upon the government to instruct the National Capital Commission to proceed with a detailed assessment of a bridge linking the Canotek industrial park to the Gatineau airport, which is known as option 7 in the second phase of an environmental assessment regarding an interprovincial crossing in the national capital region.

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[*English*]

#### 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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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### THE BUDGET

#### FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from January 30 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

[*Translation*]

I am very happy to be participating in this debate on behalf of my constituents in Mount Royal, a dynamic, committed, rainbow-like riding.

The Speech from the Throne began as follows:

In these uncertain times, when the world is threatened by a struggling economy, it is imperative that we work together, that we stand beside one another and that we strive for greater solidarity.

[*English*]

This co-operative sentiment, this invitation to work together and stand solidly with each other is a welcomed and changed attitude in marked contrast to the government's stewardship of the last three years.

During those three years, the government ignored the warnings of economists against its tax policies and the admonitions of this party about the largest spending spree in history. It managed to drive a \$15 billion budgetary surplus into the ground even before the recession began.

In September, when the recession began and every other G8 country was in fact addressing it, the government continued to insist there was no recession.

In October, when G8 governments began to plan around a necessary budgetary deficit, the government continued to insist that it would never run a deficit.

In November, when the global economic meltdown began, the government's economic update astonishingly promised a surplus in 2009.

When that co-operative leadership, which the government now speaks of was so needed, the government, in its economic update, chose to mock Parliament and the people with a series of divisive and adversarial measures. Those measures were more about partisan politics than they were about the economic well-being of Canadians, such that we lurched from an economic crisis to a political crisis to a national unity crisis. Then there was the proroguing of Parliament, during which period we lost more jobs than in any other comparable period in the last 20 years.

We are pleased not only with the new and necessary co-operative and consultative approach, but that the approach has also included initiatives suggested by, among others, our own party, including the expanding of the working income tax benefit and the child tax benefit, affordable housing initiatives, infrastructure investment, investment in regional development bodies, credit access, investment with respect to the infrastructure for aboriginal peoples and the like.

The budget regrettably remains a flawed document, one in which there is an absence of an overarching vision and strategy, one bereft of the great national projects that not only benefit the economy but help to inspire the nation.

For example, while the budget invests in the physical infrastructure of universities and laboratories, which is clearly welcome and needed, it nonetheless ignores the investment in the sciences, in the research, in the ideas that underpin and inspire the work in those universities and laboratories. At the same time, there is an absence in the budget of any reference to the Genome Canada budget, to the diminution of funding for research granting councils and its lack of support for equitable access to higher education.

What we note in particular is what has been called a manifest disregard for science, as the distinguished science journal, *Nature*, lamented a year ago. Another distinguished journal, *Science*, now counsels us, warning about the possible outflow of scientists, researchers and educators from Canada to the United States.

*The Budget*

Second, while the budget speaks of a green infrastructure fund, again there is no grand vision of a triple-E initiative of the protection of the economy, of investment in energy technologies and, in particular, with regard to environmental protection. In effect, what we have here, in contrast that of the United States, is a piecemeal approach to environmental protection. What is needed, as we see south of the border, is a grand initiative, yet again another grand project on behalf of our country which reflects the kind of inspiration that Canadians need and wish to engage in.

Third, while the economic meltdown can be expected to adversely affect the most vulnerable among us, especially the poor and children living in poverty, there is no mention at all of poverty and no mention of the plight of the poor in this budget. There is no undertaking in the throne speech, for example, to make poverty history on the international level as best we can. There is no undertaking to address and redress the domestic needs in Canada.

• (1010)

I recall when the leader of the opposition at the time spoke about a national project in which we would have a 50:30 formula, in which we would seek to have one-third of poverty reduced in the next five years and reduced as well by half the number of children living in poverty.

The fourth concerns the health care system. Health care impacts adversely on the population in cases of economic meltdown. Here again we propose, and I recommend again, that there be a massive investment with respect to increasing the supply of doctors and nurses. If we look at what will happen in an adverse economic situation with regard to primary care, home care, palliative care and emergency care, we will need to enhance the number of health care professionals.

Finally, there is no reference to a justice agenda that speaks to the protection of those most vulnerable in our society. We will recall that the test of a just society is how it treats the most vulnerable among it. How does it treat its aboriginal people? How does it treat its immigrants and refugees? How does it treat its disabled? How does it treat those who need the government's protection and need it in a kind of access to justice and equal justice?

I mention in this regard the importance of having a national comprehensive and sustainable legal aid plan for both civil and criminal purposes. The absence of such a plan impacts adversely on those who are most vulnerable. I mention the importance of equal justice, of restoring the court challenges program. Again, the absence of such a court challenges program impacts adversely on minorities and equality rights seekers.

I mention in particular the plight of aboriginal people whose situation, as we meet, is before the universal periodic review of the United Nations Council on Human Rights, again, disparities in access, in justice and in particular the plight of disappeared aboriginal women.

I close with one particular reference in the budget. The budget calls on us at a time of economic meltdown to mobilize our energies, and it is correct, but it speaks only about the domestic arena. What about the economic meltdown that has occurred in this same period of which the budget speaks of the last three months, not only

domestically but internationally? What about what is happening in Africa, in Zimbabwe, in the Congo, in Darfur and in Somali?

We have to turn our attention as well to those less privileged than we are and ensure that do what we can to combat and redress those kinds of imbalances afar as well as at home.

• (1015)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to have a discussion today on the budget.

The hon. member talked a lot about social justice issues. He talked about a lot of important things, everything from aboriginal rights to world rights and Canada's role in those. What I find difficult to accept is the member pretends to be an advocate to those causes, but chooses to do nothing about them. He decides to run down the Conservatives' budget and their philosophy and then supports them in their measures.

Some of his colleagues ironically are going to stand up against the budget. He is not going to apparently do that. Why will the member not do that? If those issues are so important to him and his principles, why does he not do something about it? Why does he not act individually? He can make a choice. He can choose a different path. He chooses not to.

However, he comes to the House and complains about those issues, says that he is an advocate for those causes, but then chooses not to do something. Some of his colleagues are making a difference, why will he not?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Madam Speaker, I thought we were going to, in accordance with the opening statement in the Speech from the Throne, join together, and that is how I began, in a spirit of solidarity and co-operation while we work together with each other.

I contrasted that with what had happened in the last three years. I said that I welcomed that approach. I talked about some of the good measures in the budget and then I talked about those measures in the budget which I thought were flawed and could be improved.

If the hon. member really cares about the people of Canada, if he really cares about the economic well-being of Canadians, then he would not indulge, again, in partisan, divisive politics and he would call us together to work for the good of Canadians.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I again congratulate my colleague, one of the most eloquent speakers in the House, for his passionate speech in defence of the defenceless, not only in our country but also abroad.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague, who is one of the leaders of human rights in the world, a couple of questions.

First, does he not feel that the government can employ more liberal uses of EI to ensure that those who are impoverished, those who have lost their jobs, are able to get the resources they require during their time of greatest need?

*The Budget*

Second, the government has regressed on the part of Canada's traditional and active international forays to help those who are least privileged, those who face the end of a knife or AK-47 in places like the Congo, Zimbabwe and Sudan. Does he not think the government has a huge opportunity that it has so far not grasped to deal with those crises abroad, which Canada is uniquely positioned to address?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Madam Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague to the effect that we not only have to expand benefits with respect to employment insurance, but we have to expand the pool of eligibility. We have to broaden the access with respect to the employment benefits.

On the matter of those less privileged, particularly those who are so vulnerable internationally, we will join with the government. However, again, this is not a partisan matter. Africa is the forgotten and abandoned continent, where in Zimbabwe alone 80% of the people are in need of food assistance. There is a cholera epidemic. In the Congo thousands are in desperate need of humanitarian protection because of the worst misogynistic mass rape to have ever taken place in the world. In Darfur a genocide by attrition continues.

I could go on, but Africa is tragically a forgotten and abandoned continent. That should be a priority in our foreign policy and it should find expression in our budgetary allocations.

• (1020)

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, when governments bring down budgets, people affected prepare for both good news and bad news, hoping naturally that the good outweighs the bad. No one could have prepared themselves for the bad news inflicted on the people of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We all know there was much more the government could have done to stimulate the economy of the country, like, for example, recognizing the importance of the need to diversify the economy in provinces where traditional industries continue to experience difficulty. The fishery is one of those industries, yet there is no mention of the fishery in the Conservative budget.

While the government was undertaking its budget consultations, I wrote to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the minister responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador, bringing to their attention the need in the riding I represent for infrastructure to grow the aquaculture industry. This was an opportunity for the government to help stimulate the economy in an area of Newfoundland and Labrador that had suffered immensely because of the collapse of the ground fishery.

I now know any optimism I had that the government would look favourably on helping the people of Newfoundland and Labrador was foolhardy.

Not only has the government decided not to help Newfoundland and Labrador weather the recession, but it has done irreparable harm by removing hard fought and hard won benefits under the Atlantic accord. According to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the province will lose \$1.5 billion as a consequence of the actions of the Conservative government in the budget.

Such a move will have a devastating impact on the people and the finances of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The loss of \$1.5 billion will see the per capita debt per person in the province increase by \$3,000. Newfoundland and Labrador already has the highest per capita debt in the country.

The Prime Minister is on record saying that every region of our country has to be treated fairly. Where is the fairness for Newfoundland and Labrador? What would motivate a government to introduce a measure that would be so harmful to one group of Canadians?

Is it possible that the Prime Minister is seeking revenge against a group of people that exercised its right in the last federal election to vote against the government and send six Liberal MPs and one NDP MP to represent them in Ottawa? While that has to be disappointing for a Prime Minister, surely he would not stoop to penalizing those people. The logical approach would be to try and regain the trust of those people, which is why I question the Prime Minister's motives.

Clearly the Prime Minister has underestimated the will of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to come together in a crisis. This move by the government has galvanized Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to the point that their preference today, as a result of the government's actions, would be to take the country into an election.

There is time for the Prime Minister to right this wrong. Acknowledging that a mistake has been made and grievous damage done as a result of that mistake, which he cannot allow to stand, would be the magnanimous thing to do, especially if he is sincere in his comments that every region of the country must be treated fairly.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are proud people who have worked hard for every benefit that has come their way. To ask they accept such an injustice that has been perpetrated on them by the government is simply too much to ask.

Anyone who knows the province's history, the hardships that people have endured and the injustices it has experienced over the years, would have to understand the reaction of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to this decision by the government.

I am calling on the Prime Minister to think of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and how this budgetary decision will impact them. He is the Prime Minister of all Canadians, regardless of how they voted, just as I am the member of Parliament for everyone in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's, regardless of how they voted.

• (1025)

If I were to follow what appears to be the Prime Minister's example, I would only work on behalf of those who voted for me, and the Prime Minister knows as well as I do that that would be wrong. I am the representative for all the people of Random—Burin—St. George's, just as he is the Prime Minister of all Canadians. The time has come for the Prime Minister to show it.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about Newfoundland in the way she did with respect to its future.

*The Budget*

All of us here when looking at the budget think of the future. We do not think of today or six months from now. We do not think of positioning ourselves for an election in the next year. We think about what is good for the future of the country. Certainly this budget, which not only affects Newfoundland this year but for the next three years with the change in equalization, is a very serious blow to that region of the country.

The previous Liberal speaker indicated that somehow we are not standing up for Canada in that we do not support the budget. To me, standing up for Canada means that I think of the future of this country, not of political expediency. I was willing to go into a coalition with another group in this Parliament and work together for the future of this country.

I do not see that right now from the Liberal Party. I see the Liberal Party accepting expediency once again as the way it works in this Parliament. I would like to know how my hon. colleague feels about this.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Madam Speaker, this is a serious situation for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, one with which I am not about to play politics. People need to realize that if we do not stand up to be counted as a province now, then the Prime Minister will, I fear, continue to wreak havoc on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

No matter what political stripe, anyone would have to look at the measures contained in this budget as they impact the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and agree that they are simply wrong.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have suffered too long. The province has been at the risk of not being able to deliver for its own people. Here the government had an opportunity to provide those programs that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need, just as all Canadians need. What is happening with this particular measure is that the government of Newfoundland and Labrador will be put in a position where those programs are at risk and that is simply not right.

• (1030)

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech.

We are dealing with a huge economic challenge before us. One of the problems is that the government has not invested in one of the key drivers of the economy, which is research and development. Our former leader wanted a huge investment in greening our economy. He articulated the challenges in greening our economy and provided a lot of constructive solutions.

I would like to ask my colleague how she feels the government should make strategic investments in research and development to enable the Canadian economy to maximize future opportunities that present themselves to our nation.

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Madam Speaker, interestingly enough, one of the areas in which we would like to see a lot more in terms of research and development would be the fishery, which is paramount in terms of the future of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We talk about diversifying the economy. As I said in my remarks, one of the areas in which we would like to do that would be

aquaculture. If the government were to look at opportunities that exist where more research and development could be carried out, aquaculture certainly would be one of those areas.

There are many areas in a province such as Newfoundland and Labrador and in all of Canada where much more could be happening in terms of employment opportunities. We could do more in terms of research and development. That would also apply to our green industries. We should be doing everything we can to move them forward.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Red Deer for sharing his time with me today.

I am pleased to stand in the House to speak in support of the economic action plan that was presented by the Minister of Finance last Tuesday.

Before I do that, however, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of the riding of Newmarket—Aurora for the privilege of representing them in the House of Commons. It is an awesome privilege and an awesome responsibility. I hope that I never lose the sense of amazement I feel when I take this seat that represents the voices and the votes of the over 80,000 voters of Newmarket—Aurora.

The people of Newmarket—Aurora, like the people in other communities across this country, are diverse in ethnic origins. However, my constituents are united in their aspirations to work hard to accomplish their goals and dreams and to provide opportunities for their families. The residents of Newmarket—Aurora want Canada to be the best place to live, to work and to play.

This action plan is for the future of this country. Many of my colleagues have spoken at great length over the past week about the broad brush strokes of this economic plan. They have outlined the positive influence of the infrastructure investments, the tax relief for individuals and businesses, the action to stimulate housing construction, and the support to businesses and communities.

I met with members of Newmarket—Aurora in our own prebudget consultations and I am pleased to say that over and over I heard from my constituents that home renovations would stimulate the local economy. The contractors in my riding, the window and door manufacturers, the deck builders, the hardwood floor suppliers and installers know that they can sign contracts this spring and that they will have solid employment.

*The Budget*

On January 15, I met with members of the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce. I heard from them that tax reductions for their businesses would allow them to purchase new equipment and to hire more employees. Our government has responded by providing a stimulus to businesses through tax relief, including a temporary 100% capital cost allowance rate for computers, extending the temporary 50% straight-line accelerated capital cost rate to investments in manufacturing or processing machinery and equipment undertaken in 2010 and 2011, and providing over \$440 million in savings for Canadian industry over the next five years by permanently eliminating tariffs on a range of machinery and equipment. Other business investments are targeted to help our businesses and industries. With the infrastructure dollars also outlined in this budget, our businesses will bid for the projects in our local communities and have the cashflow required to acquire new equipment and to pay their employees.

Many other measures are outlined in our economic action plan which will stimulate our economy and I am pleased that my colleagues have spoken about them. My colleague, the member for Brant, spoke at length last week about the impact the home renovation dollars will bring to his riding. His expertise and experience in that industry are a welcome affirmation that this measure will benefit all Canadians. My colleague, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga, praised the investments we are making in post-secondary education.

Rather than review those measures again, I would like to highlight another initiative to which our government has committed resources.

As part of the investment in infrastructure, the economic action plan has a commitment to the knowledge infrastructure. These investments will modernize universities and colleges, build world-class research infrastructure, expand health information systems and improve broadband services in rural Canada.

The health infoway is critical to achieving an efficient and effective health care system. Health care is identified by a majority of Canadians as an area which should receive priority spending.

• (1035)

From my work in the past in a disability management firm owned by my husband and me, we have worked closely with the medical profession. We often have been told by these front-line health care providers that the delay in receiving test results, be they MRI reports, CAT scans or even X-rays, delays the report which the medical professional can provide. Should a patient require a second opinion, which is his or her right and which a patient can request at any time, it is easier for the physician to order a second set of tests rather than wait for the transfer of the information from the first request. This creates delay in treatment, incurs costs and stress for the patient, higher costs for the health care system and subsequently to employers, employees and our economy in lost productive time. My own physician concurs with the electronic records initiative and commends our government for being proactive on this project.

The initial investment in budget 2007 of \$467 million is complemented in the action plan with \$500 million to support the goal of having 50% of Canadians with an electronic health record by 2010. I applaud our government for this proactive initiative. It will not only enhance the safety, the quality and the efficiency of our

health care system, but will also result in a significant positive contribution to Canada's economy, including the creation of thousands of sustainable knowledge-based jobs throughout Canada.

With initiatives of this nature in the economic action plan which are designed to benefit all Canadians, I encourage all members of the House to support the economic action plan. It is good for the economy. It is good for Canadians, and it is good for the constituents of Newmarket—Aurora.

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the new member for Newmarket—Aurora on her election. She said that it is an awesome responsibility. I am wondering if she is actually aware of the awesome disappointment that people across this country, especially among the women of Canada, are feeling in terms of her government's budget.

Twenty-five years ago I was part of the Manitoba NDP government which brought in the first equal pay legislation in this country, legislation that was founded on the concept of equal pay for work of equal value, something that was hailed by women across this country as an important breakthrough. Imagine our horror when we saw at the last Conservative convention, held in my own province of Manitoba, the government stand up with a resolution sponsored by its own caucus changing the concept of pay equity from equal pay for work of equal value to equal pay for equal work. That was followed by the economic statement which saw the gutting by the Conservative government of that fundamental concept.

Does the member believe in the concept of equal pay for work of equal value, not equal pay for equal work? Will she join with us in convincing her government to change this most regressive move that will set back by many decades the women's movement and equality for women in this country?

• (1040)

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Madam Speaker, as a woman who has worked all her adult life in careers that have often been in areas in which men have generally worked, I have to say that I have never in my lifetime felt discriminated against. I have always been able to work as a woman and prove my merit.

I do believe that the things we have put forward in the budget are good for all Canadians. As we move forward on the budget and see it passed, I would encourage all the members of the House to do so as well, because it is good for the women in their ridings as well.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member for Mount Royal has penned comments to the effect that there are no human rights that do not include women's rights.

I am astounded at the answer that was just given in response to a question from the NDP member, that because the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora has not experienced discrimination as a woman working in a profession, somehow that makes it all right. The statistics indicate that 71¢ is what women earn for every dollar that men earn.

*The Budget*

This is not up for debate. This is a chamber of debate. What is up for debate is how that member can stand there and say that the government has addressed pay equity in a reasonable fashion. Maybe she misunderstood the question. Maybe she could answer it in the vein that I know my friend from Mount Royal would have answered it had he been given the opportunity.

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Madam Speaker, I would like the members of the House to recognize that all of the things we have done from the vantage point of producing this action plan for Canada is based on the “Advantage Canada” process that was put in place in 2006 by this government. Everything that we are doing is looking at where Canada can be. We are making those decisions. We are putting Canadians first, whether they are male or female. I believe that this budget is good for all Canadians.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I also want to congratulate my colleague on her speech. I would like to ask her a simple question because she has worked in the health care field. One of the easiest things we can do to actually address the medical manpower crisis that we have in our country is to enable the 1,200 Canadian medical students, who are studying abroad, to come into the country, have a proper assessment, and get them engaged in the medical field here at home.

Will the member bring this up to her health minister, that this is a very easy way for the government to facilitate some 1,200 Canadians studying abroad to get back into the medical system here in Canada to serve the patients in our home country?

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that very good question. It is one of the very reasons why this government has taken the initiative to have foreign credentials assessed before people come back into Canada. We recognize that the responsibility for accreditation is held provincially. Currently, across Canada, there are 447 credentialing agencies.

I spent three years as vice president of one of the Ontario regulated health colleges. We did have to assess credentials coming from other countries, be they clinical practice or a recognition of Canadian pharmaceuticals. I would encourage our provinces. We need to work with our provinces to see those credentials recognized and our government is working with them to make that happen.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Newmarket—Aurora for sharing her time with me this morning. This is my first opportunity to speak to my fellow Canadians, the citizens of Alberta, and the great people of my riding of Red Deer.

I want to thank my constituents for their overwhelming support and I pledge to continue to work hard on their behalf. I also want to thank my wife, Judy, our daughter Megan and her husband Hanno, as well as our son, Devin, for all of their love and support.

It was nearly a year ago to the day that my good friend, the former MP for Red Deer, Bob Mills, announced that he would not be seeking re-election. I know how much the people of Red Deer meant to him and I will strive to serve them with the same grace and compassion. I also want to thank the hundreds of volunteers who helped me during the last election. Their enthusiasm and dedication will not be forgotten.

My father, the late Herman Dreeshen, passed away last November 21. I was so thankful that he was able to share in my election celebrations in October but even more thankful that I could relate to him the majesty and the history of this House. I was able to tell him of the great sense of pride and responsibility that I felt as I placed my name in the text scroll during my signing-in ceremony. It was not just my name but the recognition of my family, my community, and my great country that made it so special for us both. For that I will be eternally grateful. It is with that same sense of pride that I today participate in this budget debate.

Red Deer is a vibrant city, half way between Calgary and Edmonton. The city is surrounded by Red Deer County, which includes numerous bustling towns and villages, along with some of the best agricultural land in Canada. My constituency's western boundary boasts the world renowned Markerville Creamery, home of the first Icelandic settlement in North America, and is bound on the north and east by the beautiful Red Deer River.

One will find the most cowboy friendly rodeo in Canada which is held every year just north of Innisfail and the Daines Rodeo Ranch, where Jack Daines, western Canada's Don Cherry, will tell anyone who will listen how fortunate we are to live in the greatest country in the world next to the greatest neighbours in the world.

Besides the mix of innovative businesses and creative and talented artists, we are also blessed with many fine recreational areas including the Canyon ski hill, Sylvan Lake, Gleniffer Lake and my home of Pine Lake.

Agriculture continues to be one of the real strengths of our community. The hard-working men and women who look after our livestock industry and grow our crops have shown not only innovation but also perseverance in difficult economic times.

The initiatives in our economic action plan will help ensure our agricultural community will not only survive but will flourish. We put \$500 million for an agriculture flexibility program that will help the sector adapt to pressures and improve its competitiveness. We have \$50 million over three years to strengthen our slaughterhouse capacity. By expanding the Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperative Loans Act, we will help make credit available to new farmers, support intergenerational farm transfers, and modify eligibility criteria for agricultural cooperatives.

Red Deer's regional airport is an important transportation hub ensuring trade and passenger air traffic flows quickly and effectively, and is expanding its service to meet the present and future needs of our communities.

*The Budget*

Central Alberta has one of the finest colleges in Canada, Red Deer College. In addition to being a sports juggernaut in volleyball and hockey, it boasts one of the finest academic teams as well. RDC has also embarked on a trades opportunity and visual arts program with amazing technical support being available for the community to access. RDC is also preparing for its next exciting phase, that being the centres for health, wellness and sport. All of western Canada will be served by this exciting new addition.

Our government's commitment to communities, both big and small, will help central Alberta in its management of waste water facilities as well as enhance its recreational, arts and cultural expansions. Our community looks forward to infrastructure funding going into roads and bridge construction as well as new endeavours that will take advantage of the new clean energy fund designed to support clean energy research and development.

The meetings I held throughout the riding with mayors, councils, business and community leaders, as well as the collective wisdom of individuals helped create an economic action plan that is truly the collaboration of voices of Canadians.

• (1045)

As a new member of Parliament, I was pleased to be part of these deliberations. Our government has been looking after the interests of Canadians since it was first elected in 2006. It realized there was a potential problem looming on the horizon and set a course to put the affairs of the nation in order, so that Canada would be able to react properly in the expected economic slowdown.

We did this with a series of measures, some supported by the opposition and some not, but measures that have nonetheless been recognized throughout the world as being right for the times. The reduction of the GST as well as income and corporate taxes has ensured that money has stayed in the hands of Canadian families. The stimulus created by these actions created an opportunity to reduce the national debt by \$37 billion while continuing to ensure more money to provinces and municipalities for their core services.

These actions have created a debt to GDP ratio that has been kept in check and is the envy of the developed world. All Canadians have a right to be proud of this success. This is why Canadians can be confident that just as we were the last to enter this global economic slowdown we will emerge from it the soonest and we will be affected the least. In this budget, we are now able to focus on strategic investments in roads, bridges, support for displaced workers, as well as support for agriculture and tourism. These focused investments, as outlined in our economic action plan, will soon spur economic growth throughout our nation.

I would like to draw attention to some other specific points that have been introduced in this economic action plan that were specifically addressed through the local consultation process to me by my constituents. They emphasized the need to have stimulus that is timely, beginning within the next 120 days; that is targeted, reaching those Canadian businesses and families most in need; and above all, temporary, such as that it can be phased-out in order to avoid long-term structural deficits.

My constituents also spoke of improving access to financing for business and consumers, so that ongoing projects designed to grow

and create new jobs are not put in jeopardy. They also pointed out that this would be an excellent time to invest in training for those individuals who will be moving out of one industry or profession and into another. Wise use of training dollars delivered through the EI program, additional funds to temporarily expand the Canada scholarship program, as well as an investment in our colleges and universities was seen as a prudent plan to deal with both present and future employment opportunities.

In closing, please allow me to speak candidly to my fellow members of Parliament. I hold this House, its tradition and its responsibilities to our nation in the highest regard. It is incumbent upon all of us to listen to the views of our constituents and all Canadians in order to honestly and effectively represent them. They do not want political games. They want us to put away our partisanship, to stand up for our communities and our neighbours who need a helping hand, and to use this time to work together in order to emerge from this current economic malaise stronger than ever.

That is what I am going to do. In this time of global economic uncertainty, I am going to speak out for my constituents, my country, and let the world know that Canada is a leader, that Canada is a beacon of hope, and that Canada will chart the course for the future, not just for us but for the entire world.

• (1050)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on his opening speech. It is delightful to have him in the House with the decorum with which he is comporting himself.

I have two quick questions that have come from my constituents. First, a number of RCMP members have approached me. They are very upset about the rollback. They consider a deal as a deal. They have a very dangerous occupation that is a great service to Canada and a very special type of occupation. They do not feel that renegeing on such a deal is a just reward. I wonder if the member would tell me what I should say to those members who have approached me.

Second, a constituent named Jean-Paul has approached me. He works in the wind energy field. He had been approaching the government for a special increase level subsidy for the north because it costs more to put wind energy in the north. I know the member referred to renewables in his speech. Unfortunately, the government's wind energy subsidy program was not only not increased for the north but was cancelled completely. The quote I received from the Pembina Institute is that the wind energy people across the country are in shock and dismay and very disappointed. I wonder if he would like to comment on that.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Madam Speaker, with respect to the RCMP, I have had opportunities to speak with members from my own riding. They are concerned but I believe they also recognize that they have to be part of the solution. When it comes to the restrictions about which we as those responsible for public financing are concerned, I believe they understand that this is something which we are forced to deal with at this point in time.

*The Budget*

As far as wind energy is concerned, coming from Red Deer where we had an extremely well-rounded member dealing with all environmental issues, I recognize that there are a lot of things that are needed. I believe that our government is looking at all of the issues and is trying to make sure that all of the green incentives are there. I am not 100% sure how the quote from the Pembina Institute referred to by my colleague lines up with the reality of the day.

• (1055)

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Red Deer for his eloquent intervention on behalf of his community and for sharing a bit about his community. Red Deer is a city that I visit every summer for the Gospel Music Fan Festival. He is well aware of that festival. He also mentioned that he had done extensive consultations in his community prior to our tabling the budget.

I was certainly encouraged to hear that our Liberal friends across the floor are inclined to support our budget. It is a broad-based budget. It is a bold budget. It is not a Liberal budget, but it is an extraordinary budget for extraordinary times. I think Canadians understand that.

I was a little disappointed, however, to hear that the member for Random—Burin—St. George's was disappointed with the budget, so much so that she is going to vote against it. In fact she believes that Canadians are ready to go into another election. We just had an election a couple of months ago. I would ask the member for Red Deer whether in his discussions with his constituents, the residents of Red Deer are comfortable with going back into an election so soon after the last one.

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:** Madam Speaker, in talking with members of my riding, a lot of things were mentioned, but certainly my constituents do not want to go back into another election. They were looking at some of the situations that were important to them. One of those issues had to do with credit for projects that had already been approved by lending institutions. The spectre of forcing industries to scale back their projects, search for new financing or seek new partners is frustrating when the decisions are not being made locally. These are important issues that we have to keep in mind.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate on the budget introduced by the Minister of Finance last week. I am pleased not because there is anything worthwhile in the budget—as I will explain later—but because I really feel like we, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I, are doing the work for which we were elected to this House on October 14, 2008. This work includes serving as a barrier to the Conservative Party's right-wing ideology.

I would like to take a moment to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, who, I can say, is about as far from being a Conservative as one can get.

I truly believe that our work here is a direct result of the October 14 election, in which Quebeckers once again decided to elect a large majority of Bloc Québécois members to defend their values and interests in this House. If the Conservative government had won a majority, the Minister of Finance's economic statement would have been passed, without any qualms, by the Conservatives. Instead, as

we saw, the economic statement sparked a massive outcry from Quebeckers and Canadians alike.

We now have before us a budget that proposes a few minor concessions that do not, in our opinion, justify our support. However, we must recognize that if this had been a majority government, the damage would have been much worse. In that respect, I think we should congratulate the voters of Quebec for their success in preventing a Conservative majority. As I mentioned, today and over the past few days, we have been doing the work—and we will continue to do it—for which Quebec voters elected a majority of Bloc Québécois members.

I want to point out that, since the election, actions on the part of the Prime Minister and his government have demonstrated a deep misunderstanding of what Quebec wants and what Quebeckers are striving for. A number of motions that were passed unanimously in Quebec's National Assembly were completely ignored, particularly in the November 18 throne speech. We must not forget that. This budget is part of a sequence of events. Given the reaction to the November 18 throne speech, the November 27 economic statement, the throne speech delivered early last week, and last Tuesday's budget, we expected to see the government make some progress toward understanding what Quebeckers want, which is also, I believe, what a good many Canadians want. Unfortunately, that was not to be.

When the throne speech was delivered on November 18, we realized that we would once again have to deal with announcements that ran counter to the message Quebeckers delivered during the October 14 election. Take, for example, the young offenders legislation. We all know that when the Prime Minister announced during the campaign that he intended to make the young offenders legislation tougher, there was an outcry in Quebec. I do not think I am exaggerating. Not only was there strong opposition from the Bloc Québécois and Quebeckers, but the other opposition parties also spoke out against the idea of clamping down on young offenders, particularly to the extremes the Prime Minister proposed.

Another example is giving more powers to Quebec in the areas of culture and communications. The government's position in the throne speech was diametrically opposed to Quebeckers' desire to take control of those areas. Another issue is the elimination of the federal spending power. The Prime Minister made that promise during the 2005-06 election campaign, but still has not delivered on it. Furthermore, the government limited that initiative to shared-cost programs, which practically no longer exist, as everyone knows. Once again, there seems to be no will to eliminate the federal spending power. And once again, the government is attacking Quebec's securities commission.

Consequently, not only did the throne speech not meet Quebeckers' expectations, it went in the completely opposite direction. Furthermore, there was nothing in the throne speech about the economic crisis.

*The Budget*

•(1100)

The outcry that ensued in Quebec and Canada led the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to announce that an economic statement would be presented on November 27, if my memory does not fail me.

I do recall that, on November 24, the Bloc Québécois presented a two-year recovery plan requiring several billion dollars and containing a certain number of measures for the manufacturing sector, for example. They had 14 well-defined measures. There were also provisions for retirees and older workers as well as improvements to the employment insurance system. It was a recovery plan costing in the order of \$23.5 billion, around \$25 billion, which was therefore within the acceptable range even in the eyes of the Conference Board of Canada and organizations such as the International Monetary Fund. This recovery plan provided tangible measures to address Quebecers' concerns and, in my opinion, the concerns of the majority of Canadians.

What was in the economic statement? Absolutely nothing except for a few announcements about types of assistance for banks, with no conditions, you will recall. Once again, we wonder whether the money made available to banks to improve access to credit was really used for that purpose.

The Bloc Québécois, including my colleague, the finance critic, is determined to get to the bottom of this. What was this federal government assistance used for? In practical terms, households and small and medium-sized businesses do not seem to have had access to anywhere near the credit the federal government guaranteed. If memory serves, the government had announced nearly \$200 million for each measure. Not only did the economic statement not deliver the goods, but it also attacked women's rights, public servants and democracy by threatening the political party financing program, which members will recall was a response to the sponsorship scandal. In so doing, the government opened the door to what we in Quebec call small brown envelopes, meaning that interest groups can not exactly buy, but can influence decisions.

That is what was in the economic statement, and it caused such an outcry and such frustration among the opposition parties that the idea of a coalition was born. In my opinion, the coalition would have been a much better solution than supporting a bad Conservative budget, as the Liberals have decided to do.

After the economic statement was tabled, the Prime Minister asked the Governor General to prorogue the House, which she did. Once again, we expected some sort of announcement in the weeks that followed, before the Prime Minister came back to the House with his throne speech. But no, all the irritants I mentioned are once again in the throne speech that was read early last week and the budget tabled last Tuesday.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois has no choice and is duty-bound to vote against this budget, which does not address any of Quebecers' concerns and goes against their aspirations. I will say it again: I believe that most Canadians feel that this budget has nothing for them.

I will give a few examples. Concerning employment insurance, we would have expected the Conservative government to seize the

opportunity that has been handed to it. This crisis is extremely important and will be just as serious as the crisis in the early 1980s. It may even be more like the Great Depression endured in the 1930s. Thousands of people will lose their jobs through no fault of their own, contrary to what the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development says, and they will need financial support. We would have expected improvements to the employment insurance system, in particular the eligibility aspect. They have announced that they are adding five weeks. That is fine, but if a person is not eligible for employment insurance, those five weeks are worthless.

We also know that only between 27% and 30% of employment insurance claimants actually use all of their benefits. It is fine if they can benefit from these five weeks, and we hope they can, we are happy, but the real problem is with eligibility.

The fact that there is no income support program for older workers is another serious flaw. I would challenge the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to come to Quebec, tour the regions and defend the twisted logic she was spouting yesterday during question period when she said that people would rather stay at home with their feet up instead of working. Or, that older workers can all be retrained, which is completely false.

For all of these reasons, the Bloc Québécois, acting responsibly, will vote against this Conservative budget which is completely unacceptable. I will hold my tongue rather than use other words.

•(1105)

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and also for his concerns about people in this country, about training, and about the direction the budget is taking. I thought he might be interested in something pointed out to me by a number of my constituents regarding the development of a highly skilled workforce in the budget. This part of the budget would invest \$87 million over three years. Some of it would go to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, some to the Canadian Institute of Health Research, and some to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for scholarships for a variety of students.

However, the government has said in the budget that "Scholarships granted by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council will be focused on business-related degrees". In other words, the government has once again degraded the whole aspect of academic learning by saying that the important thing right now is business, where truly to all Canadians the requirement for knowledge and understanding in all aspects of our society remains and in an economic downturn, even becomes more important.

*The Budget*

We must first understand how to deal with problems. We have trained professionals, people working in the humanities field to understand the problems that Canadians face, and to provide solutions to the problems that Canadians face. What does the government propose in this one sentence? Because it would eliminate the possibility of these people getting support for their work and improving their ability to deal with Canadians' problems. How does my hon. colleague feel about this?

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question, since it enables me to continue what I was saying. I agree with what he says. This government is totally lacking in empathy and compassion for the victims of the present crisis. Let us remind him that this present crisis is the result of a financial crisis which is in turn the result of financial deregulation and speculative frenzy by the heads of certain major financial institutions.

We have the victims before us, and as victims they need help and support. We do, of course, agree with the measures for training and retraining and worker adjustment measures, but it must be acknowledged that people need proper income support while they are unemployed. So what good are training programs to someone who loses his job and is unable to qualify for EI? What good are they to him if he cannot put food on the table?

The same goes for older workers. Once again, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development is using twisted logic and looking for a link that is not there. I am thinking, for instance, of the older workers in certain regions. In my riding, the region of Saint-Michel-des-Saints experienced massive layoffs when two businesses closed. Workers aged 58 and over will not find other jobs, so what will become of them? They will be condemned to poverty, despite all they have contributed to the economy and to Canadian and Quebec society. I see that as totally ungrateful, unfair and illegal.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé for a very short question.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have listened to what my colleague from Joliette has had to say, and I congratulate him on his speech. We were, of course, somewhat opposed to this budget. As far as employment insurance is concerned, yes five weeks of EI have been added for workers, but on the other hand workers who lose their jobs are being penalized as far as accessibility to employment insurance is concerned.

I would like to hear what the hon. member has to say on this, because the manufacturing sector is in difficulty in our regions leading to numerous layoffs and our population is being penalized.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Joliette has the floor for a very short answer.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé for his question.

Barely 47% of the people who pay into employment insurance are entitled to benefits. People are penalized just when they need some assistance. Adding five weeks will help some working people, and we agree with that, but most will not benefit at all.

If the government had any courage it would have overhauled the employment insurance system so that people who contribute to it can access it. The government also could have eliminated the two-week waiting period, which does not make any sense. Once again, the Conservative government shows no sign of having any vision at all. We will vote against the budget.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to start by congratulating my colleague, who presented the Bloc's position so eloquently that it is difficult to rise and speak right after him.

First, I want to emphasize how unacceptable this budget is for Quebec and for a large portion of its people who are suffering through this period of economic downturn. Last November 27, the Bloc Québécois presented a detailed, fully costed, realistic plan that the government could have built on to meet the crying needs. In addition, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages met with artists in Quebec to find out about their needs and concerns. They were very clear with him and told him in no uncertain terms. The minister appeared to be listening hard, but nothing came of it in the budget, which is terribly disappointing.

There were some cultural organizations, of course, that seemed satisfied. I did not see an awful lot of enthusiasm but they seemed somewhat content. They would almost have to be because the Conservatives had announced that some programs would not be renewed. I am thinking, for example, of the Canadian television fund. There was \$120 million for it in the budget and the plan was to reduce this to \$20 million for the next two years. So the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages arrived here with great fanfare and announced that \$200 million would be added for the next two years, in an attempt to make us think that this was new money when it really was not. It is old money and the programs are simply being continued. It is the old trick of announcing the worst first and then pulling back to something not quite so bad. People feel relieved and say they are happy. That is what happened with the Canadian television fund. It was the same for infrastructure—the same scenario. The artists really do feel relieved, of course, and are genuinely satisfied.

There are two things that artists are unhappy about. They concern direct assistance for artists. What is there in this budget in the way of direct assistance for artists? Nothing, absolutely nothing. There is no increase for the Canada Council. It is true that two years ago, artists made a list of their demands, their needs, which totalled \$300 million. It is true that this government gave them \$30 million more per year. But the difference between \$30 million and \$300 million a year is \$270 million, \$270 million in direct assistance that artists are not getting and that is important to their creativity and their livelihood. The money they are getting is not nearly enough to meet their needs.

### *The Budget*

The funding cut from seven programs has not been restored. These cuts are unjustified and vicious. They are unjustified because this minister and his predecessor were never, ever willing to share their analysis. They are vicious because when a government makes this sort of cut, it should announce it. It should say that it would like to make a cut and that an analysis is going to be conducted. Then the analysis should be conducted by all the stakeholders, publicly and transparently, and afterward, the government should explain why the program no longer meets needs. This government acted to meet its own needs, because artists absolutely need these programs. The few analyses that were posted online and have since been removed, obviously, were very positive. In any case, artists—and I will talk more about this later—feel that these program were, are and would still be very effective, because they will never see them again.

There were seven programs worth \$45 million. And when I asked this minister what he had done with this money, where he had invested it, he answered, here in this House, that he had transferred the money to the Olympic torch relay. That is what he did with the artists' money. It makes no sense. Maybe as the torch is carried across the country, the money could be restored to each region. I do not know.

The most pressing demand relates to funding allocated for touring. On the matter, the International Exchange for the Performing Arts, CINARS, did an excellent study of 61 Quebec and Canadian representatives of artistic companies and agents who work internationally. The press release states that the study:

—evaluated the impact of cuts to promArt and Trade Routes.

These two important programs help our artists tour internationally. The press release continues:

More than half (59%) of the tours planned for 2008-2009 risk being cancelled because of the cuts.

Nearly a third of all tours. It goes on:

For later seasons, that number increases to 90% and more.

•(1115)

Yet it is a very effective program. It cost a total of \$5 million and provided \$25 million for those artists. Why the government eliminated these programs is completely incomprehensible. For that reason, these cuts definitely need to be examined by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

I would like to take a moment to tell the House about Yves Langlois from Saint-Armand, whose film *Le Dernier Envol* won the best long documentary award at the Breaking Down Barriers film festival in Moscow, Russia last November. Who paid for his trip to Moscow to accept his award? The American government paid for his trip. The American embassy paid for Mr. Langlois to go to accept his award in Moscow. What a disgrace, and for the whole world to see. It is embarrassing. This minister is making us look like beggars on the international stage. It is completely unacceptable. Mr. Langlois is obviously extremely disappointed and ashamed to say he is Canadian.

We are currently in the midst of an economic crisis. The cultural sector was functioning quite well with a little help from government. Now, because of this minister, who is incompetent and unable to defend his artists and cultural organizations, and because of the

current government, this economic sector will be in dire straits for the next few years. Do not get me started on the Canada Prizes for the Arts and Creativity because I am so angry.

The Canada Prizes for the Arts and Creativity is akin to an American Idol contest but in Toronto. This government will give \$25 million—that is not peanuts—so that two Toronto businessmen can organize an international American Idol. Who will benefit from this money? \$100,000 per year and some bursaries will be awarded to young foreign artists. I have nothing against giving money to foreign artists. I even believe that Canada and Quebec should obtain international recognition in this way and be watching for new emerging international artists. What I am against is the fact that we asked the government, and so did Canadian and Quebec artists, for money to send our artists abroad. It misunderstood and is giving money to foreign artists. That makes no sense.

In closing, in the Canadian Heritage plans and priorities for 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010, found on its web site, the major priority is “Canadians express and share their diverse cultural experiences with each other and the world”. He could have stated, “Canadians and Quebecers”. That is the priority of the Department of Canadian Heritage. In this budget, there is money for infrastructure. Does it meet this priority? Not at all. Does the Canada Prizes for the Arts and Creativity initiative meet this priority. No, on the contrary. Would restoring funding that was cut to the arts and culture programs meet this priority? Yes, but it is not in the budget.

•(1120)

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech given by my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert. It was an excellent speech in which she defended culture. I would like her to explain to me why the Conservative government and the Liberals will be voting for this budget which slashes funding for Quebec culture and the promotion of its cinema and so forth. By their actions, are they not threatening the very identity of the Quebec nation? Is this a way for the federal government to assimilate us and ensure that our francophone culture does not reach international audiences?

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Madam Speaker, this government's intentions are not clear. Each time we ask questions, it denies everything. It does not tell us what it is really thinking. It says that it has not cut programs and that it has never given so much money. However, it never says that in reality, the Department of Canadian Heritage also includes the Olympic torch relay and that funding within the department is being shuffled. The government is giving the department more money, but this money is allocated to the Olympic torch relay and other Olympic activities. We can only assume what their intentions are.

Artists were extremely disappointed to see programs cut. They tried to make their point heard last summer and in early fall. During the election campaign, they gave this government some bad press. Think about the video with Michel Rivard when he tried to defend his song *La Complainte du phoque en Alaska*.

*The Budget*

This government is definitely angry. It is not happy and this is being taken out on artists, Quebec artists in particular. That type of attitude might make for a good party leader, but it does not make for a good leader of a country.

• (1125)

[*English*]

**Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

I rise today to speak in favour of the economic plan which the Minister of Finance presented to this House just last week. I encourage all members of this House to support this important budget.

When Canadian voters went to the polls last October, they were aware that an economic storm was brewing. They knew that businesses in Canada were struggling to make a profit and layoffs were increasing. Canadians saw that their investments were strained and credit was becoming more difficult to obtain. Faced with that reality, Canadian voters made the choice to return a Conservative government to office with an even stronger mandate. Canadians trusted the Prime Minister and this government to lead them through a period of uncertainty and to make the difficult economic choices that lay ahead. It is clear that Canadians chose this government because of the challenging economic crisis and because of our record of fiscal responsibility.

Tuesday's budget reveals that Canadians have made the right choice. This is a government that has already, in its brief time in office, earned the respect of its citizens and its global neighbours as faithful stewards of the Canadian economy. We took action early in anticipation of the economic slowdown. We paid down billions in debt. We reduced taxes and increased infrastructure investments. We indicated at that time that we were committed to getting the economy back on track and listening to Canadians.

This government has listened. Over the past weeks and months, this government has engaged in open and public discussions with individuals and groups across Canada, undertaking the most comprehensive prebudget consultations ever. These consultations included round table discussions, meetings with leaders from all provinces and territories, and face-to-face meetings with representatives of the other political parties. They included discussions with business leaders, economists, academics, industry leaders and community and labour organizations right across this country. They also included personal requests from the finance minister to each MP asking members of Parliament to consult with their constituents and report back their findings.

Throughout the months of December and January, like many of my colleagues, I travelled across my riding of Portage—Lisgar meeting with community leaders, mayors and reeves, agricultural producers and business leaders, and seniors and students, to consider their circumstances, to listen to their concerns and to exchange ideas. Like many other MPs, I organized town hall meetings in my constituency in community halls and local coffee shops, with the sole purpose of giving my constituents the opportunity to speak to their elected member of Parliament and to have the assurance that they are heard.

What this time of dialogue and discussion in my riding showed me is that sometimes compromise is required. None of my constituents was anxious to see us return to deficit spending, yet the vast majority of them agreed that sometimes political ideology has to be compromised for the greater good.

It is the same within our own families. We counsel our children to save their money and live within their means instead of buying on impulse and getting into debt. It is an important lesson to teach and an important lesson to learn. However, sometimes in our homes and businesses, we find ourselves in extreme and difficult situations caused by circumstances outside of our control. Sometimes it is a sickness in the family, or a severe storm or a fire that has hit our home, our farm or our business. It hits hard and it hits fast, and it requires immediate and decisive action. In those extreme and difficult times, families make the necessary short-term concessions to see it through and come out stronger than before.

This nation has a great tradition of compromise and of accommodating each other. It is one of our greatest strengths. A reasonable compromise is what is needed now. Circumstances require that all of us roll up our sleeves and do what is in our nation's best interest. We as a nation, and indeed the entire globe, find ourselves now in an economic situation that is unprecedented in a generation, and it is not of our own doing. We did not cause this recession, but nonetheless it has hit us.

• (1130)

As the Minister of Finance has said, these are extraordinary times calling for extraordinary measures. I believe that this economic plan delivers extraordinarily on behalf of all Canadians, promising short-term intervention and long-term investment for workers, businesses and families. It finds a balance between stimulating our economy now and building capacity for the future. It is a plan that will help us not only weather the storm, but rebuild and prosper once again.

As the member of Parliament representing a vast prairie riding in beautiful Manitoba, I think about the effect this budget will have on the lives of my constituents, the individuals and the groups that make up my region. I am convinced that the measures in this economic plan will provide a significant and positive impact on the lives of Manitobans living in Portage—Lisgar.

This plan helps families in my riding and across the country by raising the level at which the national child benefit supplement for low income families and the Canada child tax benefit is phased out. This plan is helping seniors by increasing the senior age credit amount by an additional \$1,000. This plan will provide \$20 billion in personal tax relief over 2008-09.

*The Budget*

This plan helps communities with \$12 billion in new accelerated infrastructure spending over five years for roads, bridges, drinking water, waste management and more. With the announcement of the \$123 million communities component of the building Canada fund, smaller communities, like many in my riding of Portage—Lisgar, can now apply for funding for their important public projects.

This plan helps farmers and producers with the announcement of \$500 million for an agricultural flexibility program. By committing \$50 million over the next three years to strengthen slaughterhouse capacity, we will open new market options for the beef industry and other livestock producers who have faced severe hardship over the last five years.

This plan helps small businesses by increasing the amount of business income eligible for the reduced federal tax rate of 11% to \$500,000. With increased access to financing for small business through proposed amendments to the Canada small business financing program and the Business Development Bank of Canada, we are showing that this government is firmly on the side of small business in Canada.

In the riding of Portage—Lisgar there has always been a strong can-do attitude when it comes to facing adversity and overcoming obstacles, a real pioneer spirit and tenacity that still exists and thrives in the men and women of our towns, cities and rural areas. At many points in our history we have had to go it alone. I am very proud to serve the region I represent and I am very proud of their determination, their will and of what they have accomplished as a result.

I am proud as I travel in my riding and meet citizens in places like Treherne, Pilot Mound, MacGregor and Altona. I am proud of the courage shown by producers, industry leaders and small businesses as they stare down these current economic conditions.

Today I am equally proud of the measures that this government has taken to ensure that Canadians do not have to go it alone. For those hardest hit by the effects the global recession is having on Canada's economy, this economic plan gives a boost. For ordinary Canadians struggling with monthly bills, it puts money back into their wallets. For those out of work, this plan provides support and training. At the same time, the government has been prudent to look ahead and forecast a time when these measures will no longer be necessary.

I have no illusions. Canadians have no illusions. These measures do come at a high price. Like all debts, this one will have to be paid back, but Canadians must remember that the same government that is proposing these new spending measures has aggressively paid down \$30 billion of the national debt.

We are at a historic time, and I realize that we do not always agree in the House, but I believe our differences do not have to divide us or the nation. As iron sharpens iron, so our individual and collective thoughts and ideas can cause us to become better parliamentarians, better representatives of our ridings and indeed better individuals. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to see this economic plan passed and implemented.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague opposite for her speech, during which I found myself wondering who was dreaming in colour. The Conservative member said that her government has done a good job of managing the economy and that hers is the party of sound fiscal management.

A review of this government's—this country's—current financial situation belies that claim. In 2006, we, the Liberals, left them a \$14 billion surplus. And now the Conservatives are telling us that they have done a good job of managing the economy. I am looking forward to hearing the member explain that one. In the budget tabled just a few days ago, before spending even one red cent to help the country make its way through the economic turbulence it is facing, we are starting with a \$16 billion deficit. In just two years, the member's government has found a way to spend the country into a \$30 billion hole. Now we are facing a crisis and they want us to believe that they are doing a good job of managing the economy.

Exactly how has the economy been well managed if the Conservatives found a way to completely erase the existing \$14 billion surplus and accumulate a \$16 billion deficit before investing even one red cent? Before trying to convince us that the Conservatives are sound fiscal managers, maybe the member should tell us what sound fiscal management means. Does it mean losing \$30 billion before one even begins investing, or does it mean careful management with a surplus?

[*English*]

**Ms. Candice Hooppner:** Mr. Speaker, this government has proven that it has a record of fiscal responsibility. We have paid down \$30 billion in debt and it has not been done on the backs of the provinces.

In our families it is one thing to have a huge savings account, but when our children are starving, that is nothing to be proud of. I am proud of this government. I am proud that we have paid down the debt. We have maintained and increased the spending and the money that we have transferred to the provinces so that they can deliver what is required to their constituents and to each one of their communities.

We are responding to the economic crisis. It is a crisis; there is no doubt about that. These measures have to be decisive. We have to make sure that Canadians know that we are onside and that we are working on their behalf.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Portage—Lisgar for her speech today and really question her talking very positively about this new spending of her government in areas that make some traditional Conservatives very nervous, while not touching at all on areas where the government is cutting back, particularly when it comes to traditional Conservative strengths, for example, law and order.

The member comes from Manitoba and knows the importance of the RCMP. How does she justify her government's decision to roll back the salaries of RCMP officers? How does the government plan to recruit new members to the RCMP in rural, northern and remote communities where there is a desperate need for new RCMP officers? How in the world can she justify that kind of a cutback?

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my hon. colleague and I can serve Manitobans together in this chamber. It is a pleasure for me to answer her question.

The RCMP and our law enforcement agencies are a priority for this government. We are the only government that has invested in new recruits and we have actually backed that up with funding. We want to continue to support the RCMP. We realize the difficult tasks that those officers have. The job they have is unprecedented in this country. We want to support them, but it is not just with lip service. We want to actually give them the things that they need. We will continue to do that.

I am sure the hon. member is aware that February is I Love to Read Month in Manitoba. I would encourage her, in the spirit of I Love to Read Month, to read the budget. She will find some very positive things for all Manitobans and all Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1140)

## PRIVILEGE

### ALLEGED COMPLAINT OF THEFT

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege and I hope to be able to present a prima facie case that my privileges as a member of Parliament and even as a Canadian citizen have been breached.

I never thought that I would stand in the House and have to defend myself against false accusations of theft and embezzlement, and I can hardly say the words.

Last Thursday a member of the press, Hugo de Grandpré from *La Presse*, called my office and asked if there was any update on the charges against me on the accusation of embezzlement.

I knew nothing about this on Thursday. I called him back to find out what it was. He said that he was in possession of a Royal Canadian Mounted Police briefing note to the commissioner that said that the Conservative Party of Canada had asked the RCMP to conduct an investigation against me. It is entitled “A Complaint of Theft”. It says that certain Conservative members, whose names have been whited out, attended the Bible Hill office to report the embezzlement of funds by a member of Parliament.

I cannot tell you, Mr. Speaker, what this means to me. I have been here for 20 years. I am 63 years old. I have built my whole business career and my politics on honesty, credibility and my reputation. To have this happen is devastating. I did not even know how devastating it was until this morning when I had to call my two daughters to tell them I would be getting up in the House to defend myself against accusations of theft and embezzlement.

## Privilege

I hope I can get through this. It is outrageous. I want to present the issue. I have sent a copy of the RCMP report, and I would like to go through it.

First, it says to the commissioner, “For Your Information Only”, just the commissioner and everybody else, apparently. It says, “Issue: Member of Parliament - Complaint of a Theft”. It says, “On September 18th, 2008, Conservative Party” members who are unnamed. They are there, but the names are whited out. It goes on to say, contacted the “RCMP Cumberland County District Detachment”. This is the county where I live, Cumberland county. It continues, “requesting a return phone call”. The next day, on September 19, 2008, an unnamed group of Conservatives “attended to the Bible-Hill Office” of the RCMP “to report the embezzlement of funds by Member of Parliament”.

Then a lot of this is blanked out, but the number \$30,000 is in there. It says, something about the Conservative Party and “with a \$30,000 dollar cheque”. A lot of it is whited out, so I do not know exactly what the charges are, what the accusations are.

It says, “The cheque was written in the name of”. I do not know whether that is me, but it was not me. It goes on, “was endorsed by the Financial Officer and Director of the Conservative Party”. Then it is blank. There is more, but I will not bother to read it because it does not make sense as much of it is blanked out.

The accusations of embezzlement and theft are not blanked out, but a lot of the other information and the names of the Conservatives who made the accusations are. They are blanked out to protect their privacy. My riding is Cumberland—Colchester and the two RCMP detachments they visited were in Cumberland and Colchester. Not only that, my name was included in the back of this. It is not blanked out.

The Conservatives or whoever did this whited out the names of the people who made the accusations, but they left my name in it. It is in the end, it is in the file name, and it may be an oversight. I do not want to make this worse than it is, it may be an oversight, but there was no oversight when they blanked out the names of the Conservatives who made the accusations.

The current status is somebody was interviewed and a statement was obtained. On one line it says, “The statement provided did not articulate sufficient grounds or cause the merit of a commencement of an investigation”. The next line says, “The investigation determined there was no financial gain by” somebody.

It might be me or it might be a member of my riding association, I do not know. It puts a cloud over all of us because they released the damaging information on this, the accusations and the words “theft” and “embezzlement” but they have not released the rest of it. Then it says, “The return of the money to the Conservative Party”.

I will just go on a bit further. It says, “The investigation could be reopened if circumstances warrant it. H Division, Criminal Operations, will continue to monitor the situation”. Now I do not know whether its criminal operations are monitoring me or what it is monitoring. I do not know what it is doing.

*Privilege*

I did not know about this until last Thursday. I want to thank Hugo de Grandpré for the professional way he handled this. He did not put it out. He knew how devastating this was and he gave me the chance to put this case forward in the House of Commons. I am very grateful to be able to do that.

●(1145)

We could pick apart this thing and make it look really bad. There are so many things wrong with this. The only reason that I have any indication of what this issue is about is the \$30,000 number.

In May 2007 the minority Conservative government was approaching a confidence vote on a budget. My riding association suggested that we open an account, as required by Elections Canada, and move \$30,000 from the riding association to the campaign account, which is required by Elections Canada.

Subsequent to that I was expelled from the Conservative Party, but I was never told I was not the official nominated candidate. Even though I was expelled from the caucus, I was still a member of the party and I was still the officially nominated candidate.

As soon as we learned that I was not the candidate, the \$30,000 went back. Not a penny was changed, not a penny was spent, not a penny was used in any way; \$30,000 in and \$30,000 back, exactly penny for penny. That I assume is what the Conservatives are trying to call embezzlement. They are accusing me of theft and embezzlement.

Every person in the House had to do the same thing. Elections Canada says that we must open a dedicated account for our campaign and fund it from there. That is all I did.

I only learned I was not the candidate when the Prime Minister went on national television and said that there would be a candidate in the riding of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit, but it would not be me. That is how I learned I was not the candidate.

We immediately consulted Elections Canada and returned the \$30,000, penny for penny. Not a penny was moved, not a penny was used. The party knew this. It has had since October 19, 2007, all of the bank documents that show the money in and the money back.

This is a total fabrication. It is an attempt to smear my reputation and destroy my character. After spending a whole lifetime trying to build a good reputation and a positive reputation, I am so offended to have people knowingly make false accusations just so they can get it in an RCMP report.

This report is here forever. It is not going to go away. Now it has been made public to the media. Why?

I announced a month ago that I would be leaving politics and would get a new career in the private sector. Now somebody, the RCMP or whomever, has produced a letter saying that I was under investigation for theft and embezzlement.

My last career was with Merrill Lynch, and I was really proud to do the job I did as an investment adviser. People trusted me. They gave me their money, whether it was \$1,000 or \$1 million. I managed it and they trusted me. I did a good job for them. Now what are they going to think?

The document which says that I am under investigation for theft and embezzlement has been released and there is nothing to it. It is worse than nothing to it. It has been fabricated. They know there is nothing to it. Whoever released the document knows there is nothing to it. They had the documents to prove it, and they still went ahead with this 10 months later, after they received the documents.

I am outraged and I am sad for this institution. I have been here for 20 years. When I was expelled from the Conservative Party, I was the longest serving member in that party. I am proud to be a member of Parliament. Great things happen in this room to help people, but this is not one of them.

I am sad to see the level of our parliamentary rapport and process and whatever go downhill so far that RCMP investigations are being used when accusations to defame members of Parliament are wrong. It does not matter if one is a member of Parliament or a regular person, it should never happen.

There are a whole lot of things about this. There are some big questions.

Everybody in my riding wonders why the Conservative Party did not accept local candidates to run for it in the last election. The party would not accept people who wanted to run. Instead, I assume the Prime Minister nominated or appointed a candidate. There was no nomination process.

A candidate was appointed but not from my riding. This person was from Ottawa and had never been to my riding as far as I know. He worked for the minister in charge of the RCMP. The first thing his election team did when he came to my riding was engage the services of the RCMP to launch this cruel accusation against me. I do not know if there is any connection or not. I am not making any accusations, but it is a fact.

●(1150)

The man they appointed to run against me was a member of the staff of the minister in charge of the RCMP. I think that man's representatives went to the RCMP and made these allegations. I cannot say that for sure because the names are whited out. However, if it turns out that the names in this accusation are agents of an employee of the minister of the RCMP, we all have to ask ourselves some questions.

When I was expelled from the party, I think 27 members of the executive came with me as an independent. There were not enough people to form an executive for the Conservative Party, so the national party took over the party. It had access to all these records and bank statements. It knew the cheque for \$30,000 went out and the cheque for \$30,000 came back and not a penny was changed. I had nothing to do with that. That was the riding association and the campaign team and they act independently of me. I had no say. My name is not on any of the cheques. I did not sign anything and I did not do anything.

*Privilege*

I had nothing to do with it. I am so glad and lucky that my team followed the letter and spirit of the law with this, along with the Elections Canada regulations. I am strong because it did that. It did everything right. In fact, it even did more than that right. In my opinion, at the time it returned the \$30,000, I thought it should have deducted the bank charges. It did not even do that. It was over \$30,000 back and they accuse me of embezzlement and theft.

A whole lot of things need to be done on this. My job as a member of Parliament is completely compromised. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we deal with people on their RRSPs, tax problems with the government, investment incomes and loans and programs for their businesses. That requires trust. They have put this cloud over my head that I want them to remove. They put a cloud over my head and have hurt my ability to do my job as a member of Parliament. They have hurt my credibility. Who is going to feel comfortable coming in to my office knowing that the Conservative Party of Canada, the governing party, has had the RCMP investigate me for theft and embezzlement?

My hon. colleague says that they are not going to buy that and I hope they do not. I have built a lifetime of credibility. I have taught my kids that credibility and honesty is everything. I have had a standard speech I have given them all my life and they know it. I know they have repeated it to others, about how important credibility is. I had to call them this morning and tell them that I had to defend myself against accusations of theft and embezzlement. It is unbelievable and really sad.

The timing of this is, on October 19, the money went back. It was done. They had all the documents, but they waited until the election started. The employee of the minister in charge of the RCMP came down. Then they launched this criminal accusation against me with two RCMP branches. Now that I am leaving Parliament, out comes this copy to the media of an RCMP investigation.

How is that going to help me going forward? Who in the investment business is going to say that they would love to have me, after I get those things straightened out about the little thing about the theft and embezzlement. Think about it. Everybody in this room is as guilty of theft and embezzlement as I am, and that is, we are not guilty at all. There is no reason for these accusations.

For the RCMP to leave this open by saying that there are not sufficient grounds to proceed again with the investigation is not enough. Not sufficient grounds insinuates that there are grounds. There are no grounds. I want the Conservative Party to say that these accusations should never have been made. That is what I want it to say. If it has an ounce of justice and fair play, it will do that and not hesitate, because there were no grounds for these accusations.

• (1155)

I want to make the main points regarding my question of privilege. First of all, I want to say that if my credibility is in question, I cannot do my job to the full extent that I am able to. Credibility is everything. Trust is everything. In my world it is anyway. I have lost that now until this is fixed.

I want to know who made the decision to white out the Conservative names on this but leave mine in. It may have been an

oversight but it was done. The Conservative names are left out, mine is not. I think the government owes us an explanation on that.

Someone I talked to this morning suggested that to lay false accusations against me may be against the law. I am not a lawyer, so I do not know, but perhaps the Crown should have this investigated or considered to see if anything wrong happened here. Certainly, my reputation has been damaged. It is character assassination as far as I am concerned of the worst order. If anyone did wrong I would ask the Crown to investigate that.

I was thinking about Danny Williams this morning. Danny Williams is often animated but he says he often uses the word “vindictive”. I think we should be listening to Danny Williams perhaps a little more because this is vindictiveness.

However, it goes further than vindictiveness. This is malicious and it is vicious. It is terribly hurtful. I am so glad that *La Presse* gave this to me. I do not plan to run again and if I had left the House and then this came out, everyone would say, “That is why he left. He was under investigation by the RCMP”. I did not even know it until Thursday but that is what would happen. I am so glad that I have had this opportunity.

I said I was not going to run again, but I am not leaving here until the Conservatives who made these accusations in this RCMP report, whoever they are, make it right.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to agree that I have a prima facie case that my privileges were breached and my ability to do my job has been affected, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion and I will leave that with you.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite in his statement has never referred to any member of Parliament. He makes references to party members. He even said “the government” at one point. However, he has not referred to anyone in the House. In fact, I do not believe it is a matter of privilege for the House. We have no knowledge of these matters. The first time I was made aware of it was when he rose to speak.

To me, this is a personal statement and not a matter of privilege.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising to support the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

I think it is important to note that we do not know whether or not it was a member of Parliament or not that made these allegations that first initiated this or whether it was a staff member or someone connected to a department. We do not know any of those things. We do know that the member has been undermined quite significantly and there has been a plan to do so the way that it has come out, not only with regard to the approach to begin with but also later on.

It is very clear that the party or parties were advised that this investigation could be reopened. At some point in time either through the RCMP, themselves or through that member, they somehow got hold of a copy of the document and have decided to put it in the public realm with the particular intent really to undermine the credibility of the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

*The Budget*

Therefore, I would defer of course to your judgment, Mr. Speaker, but I would be supportive of the member's inquiry because once again, we do not know whether or not a member of Parliament was part of this. We do know the Conservative Party is definitely there. Obviously there is a direct correlation in connection with the members of Parliament and their party. They are the stewards of that party.

I believe that the member's privilege needs to be respected and needs to be heard, especially given the fact that it does affect the way public perception is perceived on the individual and the contributions this particular person has made to Canada. As well, it protects other members of Parliament. I won a question of privilege in the past. When I went through the process and had that element corrected when the Conservatives accused me of things that were untrue, it was helpful. It helped clear the public record. I hope we can clear the public record because I think the member needs this and the House needs this as well.

• (1200)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to add my own comments and support of my colleague and friend from Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. We are an adversarial political system in Canada. There are different points of view. We fight hard and we campaign hard, but there are lines we do not cross. We have talked in recent months about the need to try to improve decorum in this House, to try to work together as cooperatively as possible within this adversarial system.

I think that members here for the most part, perhaps all I hope, would agree that what happened here is not appropriate. This is clearly a smear campaign, an attempt to smear the hon. member's reputation based on a false accusation. He set out the facts of the case. I think we can all recognize this is a false accusation. It is entirely inappropriate. It goes beyond the pale and I support his argument that it infringes on his privileges as a member of Parliament.

**The Speaker:** The Chair wishes to thank the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for raising the matter and the other hon. members who have made submissions. I will take all of them into consideration as I consider this and I will return to the House in due course with a decision in respect of this question of privilege.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in the debate on the 2009 federal budget.

The comprehensive action plan contained in this budget would stimulate economic growth, restore confidence and assist Canadian workers and families during a period of global recession.

Our government is proposing temporary and effective economic stimuli to help Canadians deal with today's short-term challenges.

These investments would ensure that Canada emerges from this global downturn even stronger.

Canada's economic action plan would provide nearly \$30 billion in support to the Canadian economy this year. That would include almost \$12 billion in new infrastructure stimuli. That is money above and beyond our government's current record \$33 billion infrastructure program. It would mean more money for, among other things, roads, bridges, railroads, ports and border crossings.

There would be \$20 billion in personal income tax relief; \$7.8 billion to encourage housing construction, including money for social housing and aboriginal housing; \$8.3 billion for the Canada skills and transition strategy, including improvements to EI and more funding for skills and training; and \$7.5 billion to support businesses and communities across Canada.

When combined with our recent tax cuts, the economic action plan in this budget is estimated to boost the real gross domestic product by 2.5% and create or maintain 265,000 jobs by the end of 2010.

With this stimulus plan Canada will emerge from this worldwide recession with a more modern and greener infrastructure, a more skilled labour force, lower taxes and a more competitive economy.

These are extraordinary times, and extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures. Canadians find themselves in the midst of a global economic slowdown with daily economic news such as: banks struggle under the weight of bad debt; commodity prices collapse; and manufacturers and retailers shed jobs.

The United States economy, the world's largest economy, shrank by 3.8% in the fourth quarter of 2008 and it lost 2.6 million jobs last year. The European Union says it is facing a deep and protracted recession, that the economies of the 16 nations will shrink by 1.9% and 3.5 million jobs will disappear in 2009. The financial system collapsed in Iceland and its economy is predicted to shrink by 10% this year. In Asia, Japan announced that industrial output, consumer spending and employment are all sharply down, as its manufacturers lay off thousands of workers.

Overall, the economic situation in Canada remains better than most other major industrialized countries. Thanks to the early action of our government, Canada is better positioned to cope with the global economic crisis than other countries. Since forming the government in 2006, we have brought the national debt to its lowest level in 25 years, paying down \$38 billion in debt. We reduced the overall tax burden to its lowest level in nearly 50 years. Also, we introduced an expenditure management system to review every penny spent on federal programs, initiatives and agencies to ensure value for taxpayers' money.

Still, while we are better prepared than other countries to weather the storm, further steps must be taken to protect the Canadian economy and Canadian workers and families across Canada.

*The Budget*

Weaker U.S. and global demand, combined with the ongoing global financial market turbulence and lower commodity prices, will have a negative impact on the Canadian economy as we move forward.

Dealing with the economic downturn requires thoughtful consideration and consultation. We undertook the most comprehensive prebudget consultations ever. We engaged in an open and public discussion with individuals and groups across the country about what steps we should take so that the Canadian economy would benefit.

•(1205)

The Prime Minister, the finance minister and individual MPs listened to the people throughout Canada. We established a non-partisan economic advisory council of eminent Canadian business leaders for advice. We invited leading representatives of the other political parties to face-to-face meetings. The finance minister had round table discussions with business leaders, economists, academics, industry leaders, community and labour organizations, and government leaders from all provinces and territories. All of this was done as we prepared for the earliest federal budget in modern history.

From all of this consultation, emerged Canada's economic action plan. As the world struggles with the effects of the global recession, we are ensuring that the future belongs to Canada. Our plan will provide almost \$30 billion in support of the Canadian economy this year.

This stimulus will also bring many benefits to British Columbia. Budget 2009 provides B.C. with its share of \$4.5 billion over two years for infrastructure projects such as roads, water and sewer system upgrades. It also accelerates payments of up to \$75 million over two years for additional infrastructure projects. The plan provides the people and businesses of B.C. with tax relief of \$3 billion over the next five years and provides billions to keep EI rates low for 2009-10.

There is also action to stimulate housing construction by providing billions to build quality social housing, stimulate construction and enhance energy efficiency. The real renovation tax credit will provide up to \$1,350 per homeowner, which will benefit B.C. homeowners by up to \$419.2 million over two years.

There are also measures to improve access to financing for businesses to obtain the resources they need to invest, grow and create new jobs, and give consumers the adequate financing they need.

As well, budget 2009 includes action to support businesses and communities during this global recession, with \$7.5 billion in extra support for sectors such as forestry and manufacturing, as well as the regions and communities that depend upon them.

B.C. will also benefit from specific initiatives including an additional \$81 million over the next two years to accelerate the cleanup of federal contaminated sites, a share of \$2 billion to support deferred maintenance and repair projects of post-secondary institutions, \$80 million to modernize and expand border services facilities, including the Pacific Highway, and \$40 million over two years to support tourism, including the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In addition to those measures, B.C. will continue to receive historically high and growing federal transfers in 2009-10 that will total \$5.3 billion, an increase of \$200 million from last year and a \$503 million increase over the former Liberal government.

What is more, B.C. will see growing health and social transfers to help the province pay for vital health care, educational and social services for families that depend upon them.

Our government's economic action plan responds to these historic times by providing significant stimulus to the economy to help protect and create jobs, to support families by cutting taxes and to prepare our country for success in the years ahead with meaningful investments.

While Canada is coping with a global economic downturn, our plan will ensure we emerge even stronger as the economy recovers. The targeted and temporary measures will build on Canada's long term strengths while helping address short term challenges.

With our action plan, Canada and B.C. will emerge from this global recession with better infrastructure, a more skilled labour force, lower taxes and a more competitive economy. This is a plan Canadians wanted and this is a plan that will create and maintain jobs for today and tomorrow. It is a plan that is good for Canada, good for B.C. and good for my riding of Fleetwood—Port Kells.

•(1210)

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will keep the discussion very local to the Surrey and Delta areas.

I would like to tell the House that once the finance minister was in Surrey. He is the only political person I have seen stopping people from taking questions from the public. If there were any consultations, it was from the leader of the Liberal Party and also the member for Kings—Hants. They went to Surrey to have open discussions and to take questions.

When I look at this, the only money that is flowing into Surrey is the money that was committed by the Liberals. No new infrastructure money is flowing from the Conservative government.

Surrey has two shovel-ready projects, one is the RCMP building and the other is a library. What will the member do to get money flowing today into Surrey?

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, the member talked specifically about consultation over the last month.

*The Budget*

Over the last month, I have been talking with people in my riding, in the communities across B.C. and the lower mainland. I have met with people in my office and I have spoken to people at events, I have held public meetings to discuss how my constituents feel the federal budget should tackle the current economic crisis. The people have spoken and we have listened, and this budget includes more money for infrastructure.

This government has provided more money in history than any other government.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague talk a little about the infrastructure program and the money the federal government will invest in the various provinces and in Quebec. I would like to point out a couple of things to her. First of all, it would be better if the money the federal government plans to invest in infrastructure were transferred in full to Quebec. The needs of municipalities in terms of infrastructure are well known in Quebec at this time. Thus, instead of spending that money on different programs—since negotiations between Ottawa and the provinces can sometimes take a very long time—it could simply transfer that money to Quebec. As a result, the job creation targeted by the federal government could be achieved much more quickly and we might be in a better position to deal with the current crisis.

I would also like to explain another point to my colleague concerning certain municipalities. In Berthier—Maskinongé, some municipalities have only around 300, 400 or 500 residents and they are often deep in debt. With the one-third, one-third, one-third agreements, even if the money is allocated, the municipalities cannot necessarily address their infrastructure needs. Thus, a more accessible program is needed, such as 50-35-15, where 50% comes from the federal level, 35% from the provinces and 15% from the municipalities. Perhaps this would be more beneficial for—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, as I told the previous member, our government has done a lot more on infrastructure than any other government in history. We are very proud of our record.

The 2009 budget, Canada's economic action plan, responds to the global economic crisis that started in the U.S. The member should realize that we are doing a lot and we are very proud of our record.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure to speak today to the budget. I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Three years ago, the Conservative government inherited the best fiscal situation of any incoming government in the history of Canada: a \$12 billion surplus and the fastest growing economy in the G8. When we move forward about two and a half years we can see that the government, even before the economic downturn, had actually squandered that remarkable fiscal inheritance, not only spending through the \$12 billion surplus but eliminating the \$3 billion contingency reserve that was there to protect Canadians

during the tough times and against unforeseen external shocks and circumstances.

Not only that, the growth of the Canadian economy had been reduced to the extent that we went from the fastest growing economy in the G8 to the slowest growing economy in the G8, all before the economic slowdown. On page 217 of the budget, table 4.3, one can see in black and white that the deficit for next year, even before one penny of stimulus investment, will be \$15.7 billion.

That is important because on November 27, 2008, in the economic statement, the Minister of Finance told Canadians that there would be a \$100 million surplus next year. On December 17, 2008, he updated his numbers to tell Canadians that there would be about an \$8 billion deficit. On January 27, with the budget, we learned that the government was projecting a \$15.7 billion deficit for next year. The numbers have changed from a \$100 million surplus, to projecting an \$8 billion deficit three weeks later, to projecting a \$15.7 billion deficit less than two months later before any new investments or stimulus to address the economic slowdown.

The challenge I have is in trusting a government for its projections three years or four years out, when it tells us that it will get Canada out of deficit as the economy recovers, despite being so wrong so frequently over a period of just a few weeks. I have great concerns about this because over the last 10 years we have seen the Government of Canada, through the strong fiscal management of both the Chrétien and Martin governments, put Canada on track to not only pay down a \$43 billion deficit that the Chrétien government inherited from the previous government, but to actually pay down \$105 billion of debt over that period. Over the next four years, we will see Canada go further into debt by \$85 billion based on the Conservative numbers, if we are lucky.

I am greatly concerned about this. Earlier today we saw Dale Orr, a prominent Canadian economist, predict that the stimulus measures in the budget may not have as great an effect on the growth of the economy as the Conservatives are projecting. Once again, they are basing their projections on numbers that economists are already questioning.

I was at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland over the weekend. Leaders from around the world were openly questioning the degree to which the stimulus packages would affect growth. Everybody acknowledges and recognizes the need to invest and to try to address this global economic downturn together.

*The Budget*

Governments from around the world are trying to work together to put together stimulus packages and other measures that will work. However, the fact is that we are not sure to what extent the growth will actually reflect the investment in these stimulus packages, which is why the investments made in this budget ought to have had a longer term focus, such that they would have made sense in good or bad times. This is why they should have invested in science. Instead of cutting funding to Genome Canada, they should have invested in science to make Canada a global leader in research and development and commercialization. They should have invested more in universities and reformed our tax system to attract capital to early-stage investment that could have created the kinds of technologies that could make Canada a global leader.

• (1220)

The government ought to have partnered with the venture capital community and with scientists who need that venture capital and now find they cannot get the investment they need to perform the early-stage research and development they have to do if we are going to have any developments or commercialization activity in 10 to 12 years.

Global venture capital has dried up. Smart governments are now forming funds to invest directly in venture capital, along with venture capitalists, to ensure that in 10 or 15 years we will see the scientific discoveries that we need to make if we are going to evolve positively as a planet.

The government did not make the investments in green research and development that are needed to address climate change.

The fact is that a couple of years ago most governments, with the exception of the Canadian Conservative government, were seized with the issue of climate change. Now we are talking about the global financial crisis and how we are going to address financial governance. We are talking about how we are going to address today's market failure, yet we are not even talking about the last market failure, which was climate change. Climate change evolved from a failure to put a price on carbon and from failing to bring economic and environmental arguments together.

The fact is that there is really no long-term vision in the budget. It is hard to attack its vision, because there really is no vision. It is hard to attack its direction, because it is about putting money in various pots and spreading that money across the country.

Yes, it will effect some growth, and yes, it will create some jobs, and yes, there are some measures in the budget that I support. I support some of the changes to EI, although the government did not go far enough in terms of eliminating the two-week waiting period and making EI equally accessible across the country.

I support some of the investments in infrastructure. Investments in infrastructure are tremendously important. However, I wish there had been a greater focus on green infrastructure, protecting the economy, and creating greener Canadian communities, both small and large.

The government had a remarkable opportunity to transform post-secondary education with the budget, and it failed. Today we are living in a period in which we face a global economic crisis. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians are losing their jobs, and people need training and retraining. It is not just a matter of post-

secondary education being there for people when they graduate from high school and go on to college or university; it is a matter of lifelong learning.

The budget provided the government with a remarkable opportunity to create programs that would enable Canadians to train and retrain throughout their careers. Those kinds of measures not only would have helped Canadians today during the tough times, but would also have built a fairer and more competitive and productive Canadian economy in the future.

A couple of months ago, at a time of economic crisis when the Conservatives had an opportunity with the economic statement to unite Canadians, to unite parliamentarians and to address the economy, they not only failed to provide any economic vision or stimulus or ideas, but also chose the opportunity as one to divide Parliament, to pit one group against another.

The budget is an improvement over the economic statement. We could not get much worse than a government that is capable of turning an economic crisis into a political crisis. However, the budget falls short in a number of areas.

I am concerned that there is not a real plan to get Canada back out of deficit once the economy recovers.

I am concerned that we could be saddling future generations of Canadians with higher debt levels and forcing them to pay higher taxes so that we can pay lower ones. That does not seem economically sound or morally correct.

I am concerned that we have not invested in the future of young Canadians by investing adequately in a visionary approach to post-secondary education.

I am concerned that we are not creating the kind of Canadian economy that can compete and succeed globally as science creates the opportunities of the future. I am concerned that the government has failed to invest in sound science.

I am concerned that we are not properly preparing Canada to be a global leader in what will be the fastest-growing area of the 21st century economy, that is, clean energy and environmental technologies.

The budget takes some baby steps in the right direction, and a few missteps. That is why the Liberal Party is supporting the budget with strong amendments that would ensure accountability to Parliament on a quarterly basis. We intend to be a responsible opposition. We intend to ensure that the government does better, that the infrastructure money does result in projects, that we do see a plan to eliminate the deficit as we move forward, and that we invest in a more caring Canada.

*The Budget*

• (1225)

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the Liberal Party for his comments on the economic plan that has been set out in budget 2009. I appreciate that he will be supporting the budget later this evening, that he does recognize that there is movement forward, and that it is important to provide stimulus in the economy.

He made some interesting comments about EI. He thought that we have done some good things in terms of the work-sharing program and the extension of the benefits by five weeks, but he thought we could do more.

Maybe I am wrong, and I would be happy if the member could correct me, but my understanding is that when the Liberal Party was the government of Canada, the two-week waiting period was there and the mishmash of the different criteria that applied to different provinces was there. Why did members of the Liberal Party not fix it when they were in power?

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting question, and I appreciate it.

They have made the argument that we are in an unprecedented period of global economic downturn and that extraordinary measures are required. A very good stimulus measure would have been to ensure that people across Canada could have equal access to employment insurance. Today Ontario is a province where people who are losing their jobs by the thousands cannot qualify for EI in many cases, because of the current rules. I am surprised that the member from Ontario is not standing up and defending the interests of Ontarians, who deserve that access during this time of unprecedented economic crisis.

That is the whole point. We are seeing the traditional economic heartland of Canada, Ontario, being hit tremendously by this manufacturing downturn in this crisis. If the member is not going to stand up for Ontario, I will be glad to.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again I rise to compliment my colleague on his speech. He addressed many of the issues that we in our party have found to be unacceptable in this budget. The unacceptable nature of the vision of the budget, where we are going in this country, how we are getting there, and what the end result will be after an economic recession has ended in the world and in this country are questions that have not been answered.

We are going into a budget that is going to set a direction for us. Likely that direction will carry on for at least 18 months, before the next budget can be introduced and before any of the effects from that budget can enter into the Canadian economy. The hon. member has pointed out many of these shortcomings.

We had a chance to change directions here. We recognize that there was a need for a direction change. What would it have taken for him to see the requirement for the Canadian economy to change, and how can he say that it even starts to show up in this budget?

• (1230)

**Hon. Scott Brison:** Mr. Speaker, during the month of January I travelled with the member for Markham—Unionville and the leader of my party across Canada. We listened to Canadians. We were in

Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary, and MPs in our party listened to Canadians in their ridings across Canada.

What we heard from Canadians was that they were absolutely offended by the approach of the Prime Minister and the government in November, with the economic statement that provided no vision for the economy and only created political havoc. Canadians were looking for stability and the ability of members of Parliament to work together during an economic crisis.

The budget does not go far enough. It takes a few missteps and it takes a few baby steps in the right direction, but the Liberal Party and my leader are taking a responsible position. Our position is that we will hold the government to account on a quarterly basis to ensure that the infrastructure money is actually leading to projects and shovels in the ground, to new jobs, and to better infrastructure. Our position will ensure that there is a plan to eliminate the deficit as the economy recovers, and that we will see greater investments in building a fairer Canada and the kind of job creation that the budget can create if the Conservatives improve the spending mechanism.

At no point did my party ever say we would vote against the budget before we read it, because Canadians know that would be an irresponsible position that would not make sense.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a budget that is indeed long overdue.

Finally, after months of playing divisive politics during an unprecedented time of economic uncertainty, the government decided that it would govern, instead of playing politics with the lives of Canadians.

Canadians deserve real action. That is why our leader has said that he is putting the government on probation. That is why we put forth an amendment forcing the government to make mandatory progress reports and to show some accountability on its budget.

We believe it is in the best interests of Canadians for us to get to work in the House and indeed address the economy.

The Prime Minister said only a few months ago that our economy was strong enough to avoid the global recession and that he would never plunge our country back into deficit. We now face one of the largest deficits in our country's history. I say that we face the recession and deficit because of the government's blatant mismanagement. We know the cupboard is officially bare; as I said, we have to move now to take action to fix it.

The budget is flawed, but the government has taken some steps to move forward with measures for housing, for skills development, for expansion of the working income tax and child tax benefits, and for making credit available to business. As well, it has indeed made investments in colleges and universities, which is important for our country's future.

We only now see these important steps taken because the official opposition stood its ground and stood up for the interests of Canadians.

*The Budget*

Time and again we in Manitoba have been shortchanged by the government. We have watched the government stand up and announce and reannounce and reannounce yet again millions of dollars for our province. It has made many announcements on funding for Lake Winnipeg totalling \$18 million. Little of that money has flowed. Water samples drawn two and a half years ago remain untested. Will Manitoba ever see the full amount of the committed money?

The government announced new funding for the floodway and then, months later, reannounced it under a different program, shortchanging the province by \$170 million. The money was not drawn out of a national strategic fund but out of designated provincial funds, as was not the case with the previous government.

Manitobans have been continually shortchanged by the government. If the government chooses to follow through, though—and I underline “chooses” to follow through—the province stands to benefit. We stand to receive roughly \$140 million for infrastructure. However, the imperative of matching funding has the potential of either putting a heavy burden on people who pay property tax in Winnipeg, and indeed all of Manitoba, or of requiring governments to make quite unpalatable decisions.

Investment in CentrePort Canada is important for the future of the economic well-being of Manitoba, and we welcome it. Because of community collaboration, a legislative framework and strategic infrastructure investments, Manitoba will indeed have a competitive advantage and is ready to move forward on this initiative.

We welcome the upgrades to the Health Canada regional lab and the projected renovations to the Winnipeg Technical College in my riding, which are important projects for Manitoba, and we welcome the funding for aboriginal railways.

However, the potential shortfall in expected funding for health care is a serious concern, as is the one-year protection under the equalization program.

There is some affordable housing in the budget. However, I ask again whether this funding will reach Manitoba. As many know, there is a severe housing shortage in my province. I have spoken frequently in the House about the hundreds of homes that remain vacant at the decommissioned Kapyong Barracks in my own riding, at a significant cost to the treasury. It is such an injustice to pass by the homes knowing they all sit empty while people remain homeless or are barely hanging on.

These homes must be made available to the residents of Winnipeg pending the transfer to Canada Lands Company. There must be a way of working around the bureaucracy and the regulations.

• (1235)

The money in the budget will benefit first nations people. The budget has pledged \$1.4 billion to first nations for housing, drinking water and education. However, this does not live up to the promise of the Kelowna accord. If Kelowna had been implemented by now, we would be well ahead on education, health, water, and the list goes on, but it is a baby step forward.

One particular concern when looking at the budget's investment in aboriginal people is the lack of action taken for aboriginal women. As NWAC president Bev Jacobs said:

[W]e needed to hear Aboriginal women specifically mentioned as part of the stimulus plan. Instead, we heard only general comment about Aboriginal issues such as social housing on reserves, Aboriginal skills and training, child and family services.

There were early indications the budget was going to reflect society and offer protection for the most vulnerable, but I'm not so sure this budget passes the litmus test!

Not only were aboriginal women ignored in this budget, but most women were ignored in it. This seems to be a growing trend with the government's ideological attacks on women. If the government had done a gender based analysis on this budget, it obviously ignored it because once again women were left out in the cold. The day after the budget *The Globe and Mail* wrote:

Stimulus falls short for many women. Recessions hit mothers hard, but they benefit less from income-tax cuts and infrastructure spending.

The article went on to say that some Canadian women may be measuring for a new kitchen today, but that is Ottawa chipping in for the cupboards with a tax break and that does not go for each and every woman in this country. The government has totally ignored the single mom, the low income family and the senior woman on her own.

As Kathleen Lahey, a law professor at Queen's University, said that the government is still giving bigger savings to richer families who need them less.

As my colleague for Mount Royal has said many times, human rights are women's rights, and women's rights are human rights for one and all. This government just does not get it. So many of the vulnerable have been bypassed. Where is the investment in a national child care program?

As Martha Friendly, a well-known child care advocate said, “An economic stimulus budget without child care will mean that women and children are last in the lineup for the lifeboats”.

The government put forth income tax cuts and increased the national child tax benefit, but that does not go far enough. A single mother earning \$40,000 a year will only save 50 cents a day in this budget. A two income family with two children earning \$70,000 a year will gain \$275 a year. That does not even pay for a month of child care in Toronto.

The lack of child care spaces becomes a barrier as it becomes harder for women to hold jobs or full-time positions that would allow them to qualify for EI benefits. The \$8 billion in infrastructure spending does not really cut it for creating jobs for women in this country. Yes, shovels are going into the ground across the country, but the majority of those shovels will be held by men. Only 7% of construction workers are women. Only 7% of those in trades and transportation are women. Only 22% of engineers are women. Only 21% of those in primary industries are women. Only 31% of manufacturing workers are women.

*The Budget*

It does not appear that these infrastructure projects will be allocated to child care facilities or any projects that have a direct benefit to women. The changes to EI will not assist the average woman. Five extra weeks are welcome but the real need is for a change in the eligibility criteria.

Seventy per cent of part-time workers are women and almost two-thirds of minimum wage earners in Canada are women. With wages below the poverty line already, many women cannot survive on 55% of their salary.

The president to the south, in signing the pay equity bill, understands the reality women face today. What we have here is a proposal that deprives women of their right to go to court and to ensure their rights. Rights are non-negotiable. The government believes that it can bargain them away. In the language of the President of the United States, this government is on the wrong side of history as it relates to women's rights.

• (1240)

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre for her speech, but I take some offence to the statement that this economic plan only generally addresses first nations issues.

I come from one of the largest ridings in the country with almost a majority of first nations populations. This action plan deals specifically with health services and infrastructure. There is specific mention of skills training, housing, schools, and water.

Did the hon. member consult first nations constituents before the economic plan was tabled? Would she concede that this budget does more than generally address those issues?

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the member that I speak regularly with members of first nations communities, as well as with the leadership of aboriginal organizations across this country.

The government is beginning very slowly to address some of the needs of first nations, and this is after three years of overt directed neglect by the government.

**Mr. Rob Clarke:** Careful, careful.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite says "careful" and he knows that I know of what I speak.

The Kelowna accord offered promise and hope for first nations people. The government has moved a baby step forward, and I am not being critical of it, but what we need is a holistic, integrated response to first nations people that understands the needs, the local conditions and is geared to individual communities and jurisdictions.

To answer the member's question, yes, I speak regularly with first nations communities.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, an interesting development is that the members from Prince Edward Island in the Liberal caucus are going to vote against this budget. It is interesting because we have heard different members express their dissatisfaction with the pay equity issue, housing issues, aboriginal issues, workers' issues, a whole series of things, but apparently those issues do not rank high enough to vote against the budget.

I would like to ask the member about her party's strategy. It is very interesting. The argument being presented by the Liberal Party is that we need to move on something right now and there is enough in the budget that it can go on, but at the same time it is going to put the government on parole and it has the right to defeat the government based on a number of reports that will come back.

What will happen is that the Liberals will vote against that and actually kill all of those projects. Is the member suggesting that her party's tactics are to stop the stimulus package three months or six months from now, and then grind everything down, as opposed to what we could have done, which is to change the government and move for Canadians right now?

• (1245)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that it is not the province of Prince Edward Island; indeed it is members from the province of Newfoundland. Members from Newfoundland are tired of the Prime Minister's games of petty politics and holding a province hostage, and are therefore expressing their displeasure, with the concurrence and active support of our leader, to show that this kind of divisiveness and petty politics is not welcome in this House. I think that is very important.

I am not going to project three or six months out on what my party will or will not do. We will be holding the government to account. We will be looking at what measures are put in place or not put in place and what programs are being cut because of ideological bent, and we will be responding accordingly.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the minister responsible for employment insurance said, "We do not want to make it lucrative for them to stay home and get paid for it", speaking of unemployed workers, and speculated that perhaps it is ideology that is driving the fact that there was not more in the way of EI benefits, either extending it to those who are able to get it, make it more generous for those who are, or eliminate the two week waiting period.

I wonder if she could comment on what she thinks about a minister who thinks it is lucrative to be on EI.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, a short answer please.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if one can give a short answer to that question.

It shows a tremendous disrespect for Canadians to assume that they would rather sit at home and collect EI than go to work. I would invite the minister to come to my office and the offices of many of my colleagues on this side as we deal with some heart-wrenching stories from people who are trying to access EI because they are unemployed, who do not meet the criteria and are really challenged in terms of how they are going to feed their families.

[Translation]

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to address the House here today as the new Minister of State (Science and Technology).

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

*The Budget*

I am proud to stand here as the Minister of State for Science and Technology to talk about our government's commitment to science and technological excellence in Canada, a commitment that has been reinforced by substantial additional investments in every one of our budgets, most especially in budget 2009, Canada's economic action plan.

Prosperity today is measured in the currency of knowledge. Countries that succeed in the 21st century understand that the capacity to innovate, to capitalize on change, to embrace change, to generate new ideas, to take greater risks, is essential to remain prosperous, productive and competitive in a challenging and changing economic environment.

That is why two years ago the Prime Minister launched our government's science and technology strategy, which we called, "Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage". This is an ambitious strategy that is charting a new direction, one that links the competitive energy of our entrepreneurs to the creative genius of our scientists. It is a bold plan designed to build a national sustainable competitive advantage through science and technology. It cannot be done overnight, or even in one budget. That is why we started three years ago. We will continue to push hard each necessary step, each essential aspect.

Our goal is to help Canadians turn their ideas into innovations that provide solutions to environmental, health and other important social challenges. We want to provide solutions to our environment, health and other important social challenges and to improve our economic competitiveness and meet the current and future needs of this great nation.

Canada is an international leader in post-secondary research. We rank first in the G7 and second among the OECD member countries in terms of research and development expenditures for colleges and universities as a percentage of GDP. That is very good news. We have come a long way, but that does not mean we can rest and it certainly is not the time to coast.

We want to attract the best researchers, provide them with the best equipment and help them get our innovations and their innovations from the laboratory to the marketplace. To accomplish this, the government has embarked on a major program of strategic investments. These are well thought out, well planned and well timed.

In total, the Government of Canada invests just over \$10 billion every year to support science and technology and innovation. In this year's economic action plan, our government announced a series of new investments to support our nation's science and technology strategy. Over 10% of this budget is focused on science and technology. Let us talk about some of the examples.

This government is providing \$750 million to the Canada Foundation for Innovation to attract and retain the best researchers in the world.

We have embarked on an unprecedented \$2 billion program to repair and refurbish, to build and to expand the world's finest research facilities at colleges and universities all across Canada.

This year we are adding \$200 million to the National Research Council's industrial research assistance program, IRAP. This program helps small and medium size businesses innovate and conduct their own research.

We have increased the funding for Canadian graduate scholarships by \$87.5 million, as well as other scholarship programs, to encourage Canadian students to develop and improve their skills and choose research in Canada as a career.

In the last three years every one of our budgets has increased money to the granting councils in Canada, including the National Research Council, so that scientists and researchers across this country can do more research.

• (1250)

We created the Vanier scholarships and the industrial research assistance program. The Vaniers will award 500 international and Canadian doctoral students with generous three year support scholarships in order to build a world class research capacity here in Canada. We have funded new, large-scale science projects like Canarie, Canadian Light Source, Triumf and Snolab, in addition to the Institute for Quantum Computing in Waterloo that will receive \$50 million from the government.

We have also opened centres of excellence for commercialization and research, and the business-led centres of excellence all over the country to commercialize Canada's leading edge technologies, products and services, because this will create jobs and wealth for Canadians and diversify and stabilize our economy going forward.

In the previous two budgets we have also provided \$240 million over five years to Genome Canada to provide it with stable, predictable, long-term funding that is helping it conduct world leading genomics and proteomics research to benefit Canadians.

Under the Canada excellence research chairs program, up to \$10 million over seven years will be awarded for each chair to enable Canadian universities to recruit, retain and equip the most brilliant and promising researchers the world has to offer. Doing top-notch research in Canadian universities will help maintain and advance Canada's leadership in the global economy.

These investments are clear and solid indicators that we not only get it but we are getting it done. We understand the importance of supporting the very best ideas wherever they may arise, and we know that basic inquiry into the big questions at the heart of academic disciplines may not yield quick results, but can yield results that are beneficial to Canadians down the line, and that the obvious path is not always the one we should take.

*The Budget*

Canada's potential for innovation is limited only by our individual and collective imaginations. I look forward to working with our researchers, our scientists, our innovators, our businesses, and our educators so that we can continue to see success in science and technology.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

I am eager to work with my parliamentary colleagues and with all Canadians in order to realize this enormous potential.

[*English*]

I look forward to working with my parliamentary colleagues and all Canadians to see the tremendous national potential crystallize.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his commentary on a very important area.

The principles sound fine. The delivery is always the question that has to be looked at as well. Have the Conservatives followed through? Has the money flowed? Has the regulatory framework been put in place for these agencies to do their work?

I could give the member a brief example. The reproductive technology centre, although it is in medical research, is still in the same vein of the intent for excellence. We passed a bill, and that bill required regulations to be put in place, which were mandated by the legislation itself. Part of the bill's requirements was that those regulations would have to go to the health committee for review because they involved establishing a committee, which would review research projects and make recommendations for funding. Here it is. It is a number of years later. Those regulations have still not gone to the health committee, which means that the committee has not actually been started, which means that projects that could probably get funded have not been funded.

I wonder if the member would care to advise the House whether or not we can deal with this problem where the mechanisms for the research and technological assistance can be put in place in an efficient manner and in fact money can flow and authorization be given.

**Hon. Gary Goodyear:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, the money from past budgets is already flowing. I have had the honour of announcing funding for research for everything including the diagnosis and early detection of infant neuropathies with respect to hearing, which is very important. As the member may know, it is very difficult to diagnose hearing impairment in infants three months old.

We have also funded advanced research already from previous budgets. Of course, as the member knows, this budget has to pass for this money to flow. However, we have provided support research for organ transplant methodologies trying to inhibit the rejection capacity and for using biomass for fuel. We have even funded a research centre out in Winnipeg, I believe, where it is inventing techniques to help municipalities find leaks in pipes, which I understand is a big issue in the city of Toronto. Some 30% of the water used is through leakage. This technology will not only save water, but also help municipal workers find the leak and use a shovel in the ground instead of ripping up an entire street.

I want to assure the member that a number of mechanisms are already in place. The granting councils, for example, are already there. NRC is already there. IRAP is an existing program. We are supporting them because they work. That is our intention.

● (1300)

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the minister of state for an excellent intervention and highlighting the things in our economic plan that are going to help Canadians get through this crisis. I think he will have also noticed how much glee our Liberal friends across the floor take in trying to sell Canadians on whether or not the \$12 billion surplus that they supposedly left Canadians was squandered. In fact, the minister knows that we built on that \$12 billion and paid off \$40 billion worth of debt.

I would ask the minister to explain some of the strategies that we as a government took as far back as two years ago to cushion Canadians against the economic crisis we are presently experiencing.

**Hon. Gary Goodyear:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, the reason Canada is doing so much better than other countries is particularly and primarily because of the intervention of this Prime Minister in 2007. We saw the storm coming and when one looks at the charts, Canada is better in almost every sector. However, we are facing an enormous offshore crisis.

I want to point out, because I am the minister of state for science and tech, that during the best of times in the late 1990s and early 2000s the Liberals actually cut spending to all the granting councils. They cut spending to the NRC and they even cut the minister of state for science and technology. Now, we are facing a bit of a crisis. This government saw it coming two years ago and put forward a solid strategy because we know that intervening and funding science and tech creates jobs and improves our economy.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on January 27 our government tabled the budget and it really is a historic economic action plan. Historic because of the depth and the breadth of the consultation that took place to achieve this balance, yet a bold approach to stimulate the economy to protect Canadians' livelihood and to keep our country prospering.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, along with individual members listened to people and groups across the country about what steps we should take. I talked to hundreds of my constituents. I talked to farmers, families, workers, seniors, and most importantly listened to their concerns, their hopes, their dreams and their ideas. Every Canadian from coast to coast to coast was invited to provide input directly by an online consultation form on the Internet and we received over 7,000 suggestions.

*The Budget*

We held open, public town hall and round table meetings throughout Canada. We met with provincial and territorial government leaders. We established a non-partisan economic advisory council of eminent Canadian business leaders for advice on the budget and on the economy. We invited representatives of the other political parties for face-to-face meetings. I know the finance minister personally wrote every MP, regardless of the party they represent, asking them to talk with their constituents, to listen, to establish their local priorities, and to report back to him.

Round table discussions were held with business leaders, economists, academics, industry leaders, community and labour organizations in cities across this country. No government in Canada has ever reached out so much to so many to create a budget. This was done to make sure that every voice was heard and no stone was left unturned to create an economic action plan for this country. It is a plan to meet the challenges ahead and ensures that Canadians from all walks of life may look to the future with hope and optimism.

This action plan includes measures to stimulate the economy by building better roads, bridges and other infrastructure. Taxes are reduced in it. EI payroll taxes are frozen and first time homeowners and home buyers who wish to do renovations will get significant tax credits. Assistance to businesses is available to help them get financing so that they can stay in business and keep people working.

Canada's economic action plan includes measures to protect Canadians by, as I mentioned before, extending EI benefits, providing skills and training opportunities, lowering taxes, improving Internet high speed broadband access across this country, improving post-secondary facilities, increasing child benefits and more. Canada's economic action plan will provide almost \$30 billion in support to the Canadian economy just this year.

Importantly, each province is created equally across the country. I know my constituency is located in eastern Ontario and I am especially pleased to note some of the initiatives for Ontario in the budget.

There is action to build infrastructure by providing Ontario with its share of \$4.5 billion over two years for infrastructure projects such as road, water, and sewer system upgrades across the province.

There is action to reduce taxes and freeze EI rates by providing the people and businesses of Ontario with tax relief of \$9.1 billion over the next five years and providing billions to keep EI rates low for 2009-10 in order to remain competitive.

There is action to stimulate housing construction by providing billions to build quality social housing, stimulate construction and enhance energy efficiency. The new renovation tax credit will provide up to \$1,350 per homeowner which will benefit Ontario homeowners by up to \$1.3 billion over two years.

There is action to improve access to financing for businesses to obtain the resources they need to invest, to grow and create new jobs, and to give consumers the adequate financing they need.

There is action to help Canadians hit hardest by the economic downturn including enhancements to employment insurance and more funding for skills and training.

There is support for businesses and communities by protecting jobs and supporting sectoral adjustments during this extraordinary crisis with \$7.5 billion in extra support for sectors, regions and communities such as the forestry and manufacturing sectors.

Ontario will continue to receive historically high and growing federal transfers in 2009-10 that will total \$15.8 billion, an increase of \$1.5 billion over last year and a \$4.3 billion increase over the previous government.

● (1305)

Ontario will see growing health, \$9.6 billion, and social transfers, \$4.2 billion, to help the province pay for vital health care, education and social services that families depend upon.

I am pleased to report that my constituency of Prince Edward—Hastings will see some of these benefits from some specific areas of the budget.

As an example, the government will invest \$407 million in improvements to VIA Rail Canada to support improvements to the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. These investments will support two additional trains per day between Toronto and Montreal and reduce the travelling time by half an hour. The station in Belleville will benefit from this investment as it is one of three stations chosen to be revitalized.

Furthermore, I am especially pleased to see that \$225 million will go toward developing and implementing a strategy on improving high-speed broadband coverage to rural and underserved communities. We all recognize that high-speed Internet access is an absolute must today for those who are trying to either operate a business, provide a service or even provide for an economic growth opportunity in rural communities.

On another note, \$500 million are earmarked over two years to create recreational infrastructure Canada to support construction of new recreational facilities and upgrades to existing facilities across Canada.

Sports and recreation facilities across many ridings in this country drive tourism as well. The largest city in my riding of Prince Edward—Hastings is Belleville and it is the proud home of the Belleville Bulls who play at the Yardmen Arena and, not coincidentally, it is an arena that is facing upgrades in the very near future.

*The Budget*

Many of my constituents are students or faculty at the local community college, Loyalist College of Applied Arts and Technology. They are encouraged as the government will invest \$2 billion to support infrastructure, to repair, maintain and accelerate new projects at post-secondary institutions.

Our government is committed to supporting farmers with a \$500 million agricultural flexibility program that will facilitate the implementation of new initiatives, both federally and in partnership with the provinces, territories and industry.

Furthermore, we will amend the Farm Improvement and Marketing Loans Act which will help make credit available to new farmers, support intergenerational farm transfers and modify eligibility criteria for agricultural cooperatives.

Prince Edward—Hastings has a large senior population, the second largest in Ontario. They are people that I work with daily. Many of them live on fixed incomes and many of them get by on small pensions. I am pleased that there are measures in the budget that will be of serious assistance to our seniors, such as the \$400 million over two years for the construction of housing units for low income seniors.

I am pleased to say that Canada's economic action plan meets the varied challenges of our time and provides equally for all provinces and ridings across this country. What is important is that it is a balanced plan. It balances between stimulating our economy for the short term and building our capacity for the long term. It is balanced between putting money back in the hands of Canadians and new investments. It is balanced between the unavoidable reality of a short term deficit and the principle that we cannot and must not burden our children and grandchildren for decisions that we make today. It gives a boost, a stimulus, when we need it and where we need it, and it looks out for those hardest hit by the effects the global recession is having on Canada's economy. It protects the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. It protects our senior citizens, seniors who are the very heart and soul of our Canadian society. It protects our farmers, the hard-working and dedicated people who feed us all. It protects the future of each and every one of us.

It is a national plan. It is a plan based on a broad consensus of what we need to do to emerge from this global recession stronger than ever before.

I look forward to seeing it pay off for years to come. I certainly would welcome the support of all colleagues in the House who would be willing to work in a spirit of consideration and activity for the benefit of all Canadians.

• (1310)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed what the member for Prince Edward—Hastings said in his closing remarks, which was that we work together, especially in these most difficult times that our country is facing, as well as internationally. I am on the same page on that one.

Having said that, I think it is also appropriate in these most difficult and trying times that we leave the facts as they are and kind of move away from the politics of things.

Before I ask the member a question, I would like to set the record straight. The previous speaker, the Minister of State for Science and Technology, talked about how in the nineties there was nothing done and money was taken away. He was absolutely wrong. I had the honour during those years to serve as the parliamentary secretary to the minister of industry. There were programs that the current government criticized then, such as the small business loan program, IRAP and the Canadian millennium scholarship fund. What about the 2,000 research chairs that were created in our country.

The member talked about providing money for skills and retraining. We know that all sectors are losing jobs. Do we not assess before we start training what the jobs are? Has that assessment been done?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments with regard to going forward with a cooperative team approach. I think it is crucial at this point and I acknowledge his consideration along those lines.

With regard to identification of needs for skills enhancement and for training purposes, the budget has \$2 billion for R and D and for the expansion of capital, restoration and maintenance programs for post-secondary institutions. It should be noted that the split is actually 70:30, 70% to universities but 30% to the colleges.

I think the member would recognize that a lot of the training that goes into helping identify areas of concern, areas of want, areas of need and areas of deficiency in particular categories is generally handled through college applications and retraining through the EI programs in conjunction with the provinces. I am quite comfortable in their approach to that. We have dealt with this through recommendations from the various community colleges and they have adequately demonstrated that they are willing to move forward along this vein.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I very much agreed with my hon. colleague at the end of his speech when he talked about the need to come out of this recession in a positive fashion. I just do not happen to see this in the budget today. I see very little that will lead to a new economy that we anticipate will come from the convulsions that we are seeing in the world economy now.

Quite clearly in the United States we are seeing a plan for the new energy future. We will see increased pressure from the United States to clean up our tar sands. We will see increased pressure from the United States to expand the volume of renewable energy used on the continent.

The opportunities to be engaged in the production of renewable energy are not addressed in the budget. The opportunities to move ahead are simply not there. In fact, what the government has done is cut the eco-initiatives, which will reduce the amount of money available to expand our wind industry. A billion dollars over five years may go into renewable energy but much of it might be foisted off on to that boondoggle of the carbon sequestration.

How will the budget deliver a clean energy future for Canadians?

*The Budget*

●(1315)

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Mr. Speaker, I will refer to my earlier comments on the budget when I mentioned that it had to be a balanced budget. It cannot deal just with the environment, with industry, with social needs, with post-secondary education or with technology. It must deal with all of the above and it must strike the balance between meeting the social needs and meeting the actual future demands.

The member suggested that how we come out of this is very important and crucial. We cannot just go through this, put a band-aid solution on this and have the dollars that we spend not give us a return on investment, either intellectual and/or property and/or long term commitment for infrastructure. That is why we cannot have a structural deficit. What we must have is a deficit that gives us a long term result and I am quite confident in that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

I am pleased to speak today on the January 27 budget. As hon. members are aware, the NDP has decided to vote against the budget. Comments have been made that the NDP has not read the budget, but I feel we did not need to read it. We heard about it a week ahead of time on television and radio, and in the press. I do not know why we would be accused of not reading it, when we got it fed directly to our ears.

There is a reason, however. When you lose confidence in someone, you lose confidence, and clearly Parliament no longer had confidence in the Conservative government. The Liberals had also said they had lost confidence, but it would appear they have recovered it now. It is the voters who need to decide what comes next. That said, it is comical to hear the Liberal leader saying that the Newfoundland members can vote against the budget, once. So it is okay to vote against the budget, once, provided there are only four or five of you.

Those members are going to vote against the budget because of the transfer payments and the infrastructure funds. Are the members for New Brunswick in favour of the equalization transfers to the provinces, and are they pleased that we in New Brunswick will also be losing transfer payments to the province? It seems that they will be voting in favour of the budget and not following their colleagues from Newfoundland.

Yes, there are some things in this budget. We are not saying there is nothing in it. Yes, it does contain some things. But we need to focus on what is not in it. In my opinion, it was a sad day indeed when the Liberals indicated their readiness to support the Conservative party. The coalition was at last going to bring in some changes to employment insurance, changes that workers have been waiting for for years.

Another thing that bothers me about this budget is the freeze on public service salaries. As far as pay equity is concerned, the government is depriving women of their fundamental right to justice. Every Canadian, male or female, should be entitled to access to justice. But no, after all these years, their rights will have to go the

route of negotiation rather than through the justice system where the courts would decide.

This budget contains nothing for fisheries, either. There is indeed an economic crisis in Canada, what is now being called a major economic crisis. The crisis in the fishing industry has gone on for years, and, despite that, the government presents a budget that will cost fishers their shirt. Although things are not going well at all in the fisheries sector, the budget offers nothing to help out fishers whether they be in the Gaspé, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island. Furthermore, there is nothing in the budget to resolve the fisheries crisis in the Atlantic provinces.

Something different could have been done for transfers to the provinces and infrastructure. I talked to people. Clearly, the Conservatives did not talk to the same folks. We must not forget that only 20% of the money for infrastructure in the 2008 budget was used. For the major cities and towns with money, giving a third and a third and a third is no problem, but towns and municipalities do not have that money.

I must speak to one aspect of this budget. That is employment insurance. The government says it has changed the employment insurance program by adding five weeks of benefits. My Conservative colleague says it is true, that the Conservatives did add five weeks. Fine, five weeks of benefits were added, but at the end.

Last week the minister commented on the radio. She said the reason she did not want to eliminate the two-week waiting period or pay the first two weeks of employment insurance benefits was that these two weeks revealed those who were abusing the system.

●(1320)

For starters, the minister said that workers in Canada are a bunch of cheaters. Then, this week or on the weekend, she said it again. She does not want to make changes to employment insurance, because doing so would encourage people to stay at home rather than go and work. This is an insult to the workers of this country.

Why would she not do the same thing for the big companies that mismanaged their affairs? Why would she not tell the big corporations and the banks that the government would not help them because they did not manage things properly and are a bunch of exploiters? In this case, the government changed its mind and said it would give them money. The largest amount will go to the major corporations in the form of a tax reduction.

The workers get \$1.5 billion, but the big corporations get nearly \$60 billion in tax reductions. That is a ratio of 1.5 to 60. That is what the government decided to do.

The minister says that workers are a bunch of abusers who want to stay home. In case she does not know, it takes the government more than just the two-week waiting period to check a person's claim. Under government rules, it takes 28 days. Some people even wait not two weeks, but up to 40 or 50 days before they qualify for employment insurance. It is said that workers are dependent on employment insurance, but it is really the government that depends on employment insurance. In fact, it has stolen \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund—\$57 billion. It is shameful.

*The Budget*

It is sad to see what the Liberals have done. They had said they had no confidence in this government, but today they are going to vote in favour of the Conservative budget. They could have given workers a glimmer of hope, but the Liberals are telling the Conservative government that they have confidence in it and that they are going to let the Conservatives govern. They are going to support a public service wage freeze, an RCMP wage freeze, the refusal to let women go to court, all of that. The Liberals' position is quite regrettable.

Let us look at how employment insurance could have been changed for the better. During an economic crisis, people lose their jobs. And as if that were not enough, they do not even get any money during the first two weeks to help their families. Then they get 55% of their wages. This crisis would have been a good time to tell workers that this program belongs to them, that the government had stolen enough from them and that it was going to give it all back and make changes.

Of all the people who will lose their jobs—for example, in the auto industry—some have worked for 25 years, and some of those people have never received employment insurance. The minister said last week that the reason the government did not want to pay people for the first two weeks was so that it could check whether they were a bunch of cheaters. She does not even know the system. The waiting period has nothing to do with that. When the employment insurance system was set up 50 or 60 years ago, the two-week waiting period was created because there was no employment insurance. The government decided to wait two weeks to give people time to look for another job. If, after that time, they had not found other work, the government paid them employment insurance. The waiting period was not for checking whether people were cheating. It had nothing to do with that.

Instead of changing its mind and helping women and men who are losing their jobs in Canada, instead of requiring 360 hours to qualify for employment insurance, instead of eliminating the two-week waiting period, instead of considering the best 12 weeks to help these workers and families invest in the economy and find a job, the government did nothing. When it comes right down to it, in the end, it is granting an extra five weeks. So the government crosses its fingers and hopes that these people find work before these five weeks, so that it does not have to pay them, despite the profits it made with the employment insurance fund.

The most important reason for voting against this Conservative budget is because we have lost confidence in them. This same government proposed a law for fixed election dates and then violated its own law. We do not have confidence in the Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for giving me the chance to talk about this subject. I hope that the Conservatives will have a more open mind when it comes to workers and that they will show these workers some respect.

• (1325)

[English]

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Acadie—Bathurst. It seemed like he was more upset with the Liberals. I would just remind him that we are not in government.

He talked about giving hope to the workers of the country. He talked about the economic crisis, people losing their jobs. Does he think it is wise to bring down a government and spend over half a billion dollars to have another election when we just had a few months ago? Is that what he wants to say to those workers who are trying to find stability and security?

Canadians told us that they did not want another election. Does he want to spend over half a billion dollars to have another exercise?

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, first, it is not that I have more against the Liberals than the Conservatives. It is just that Canadians had hoped that parliamentarians would come here and work together.

We had three parties that were ready to work together. We do not need to have an election. I really believe the Governor General of Canada would have the authority to tell the coalition to take its place and do the right things to help the workers who have lost their jobs in this crisis.

The Liberals say that they have no trust in the Prime Minister. All of a sudden they have confidence in the government. The members from Newfoundland and Labrador do not have any confidence in the government and they have the right to vote against it. It is a one-shot deal.

Will the member tell his colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador that they do not want an election and they should vote with the government? I do not need any lessons from the members of the Liberal Party today.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague in the NDP. I agree with him entirely on employment insurance. It has not been made any more accessible. The Conservatives have just extended the benefits by five weeks. Not many people will benefit from this. The Conservatives did it on purpose, basically, to prevent the unemployed from being able to live a bit better. That is hardly surprising on the part of the Conservatives. Everybody knows that social programs are not their forte. It is a right-wing government. The Conservatives are much more in favour of banks and big corporations than ordinary working people.

The Liberals have been in the opposition for some time now. They are the ones, though, who started pillaging the employment insurance fund. They took out \$45 or \$55 billion, and instead of apologizing now for that, they just agreed with the Conservative budget and its meagre improvements to the employment insurance system. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that.

• (1330)

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question.

*The Budget*

Some changes were made to employment insurance back in 1990 with Bill C-21. More changes were made with Bill C-113 in April 1993. The Liberals said at the time that what Brian Mulroney's Conservatives were doing was terrible. Then they were elected to government. In June 1994, there was Bill C-17, where the Liberals lowered benefits from 57% to 55%. What they did then in 1996 to reform employment insurance was almost sinful. That was when they started filling the government's coffers, the general accounts, with \$54 billion. Now they say there is a \$57 billion surplus. I thought the Liberals had virtually confessed last November and said that what they did was wrong and sought forgiveness. They were ready to bring the government down and make real changes on behalf of working people.

It is disgraceful to see them ready now to support the Conservatives and carry on in the same vein as in 1996. They are coming down on the people who built this country. When it comes to families, women and children, who are in need and do not have enough to eat, the Conservatives say, "They are a bunch of cheaters, they are just going to stay home and do not want to work". It is disgraceful and the government should apologize. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development should come to the House and apologize to all the working people in this country for the way she has treated them. It is disgraceful and the government should apologize. It is unacceptable in our country. The way our working people are being treated is not acceptable. These are good people who get up in the morning and go to work—

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to be on the same topic as my hon. colleague for Acadie—Bathurst. I do not think there is a stronger champion for the rights of working men and women in Canada than my hon. colleague.

We recently learned that the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development stated that the Conservative government had no interest in making it lucrative for jobless workers to stay home. Today I would like to challenge the minister to visit some of the forest communities that I represent and make those statements to workers and their families, who are suffering. I would like her to tell the mill worker whose EI has run out and, after five more weeks, will be faced with natural gas being cut off, telephone and hydro disconnections, mortgage foreclosure and mounting debt incurred for food and clothing.

Layoff equates to an immediate inability to provide for self and family, not to mention the loss of identity. The two week waiting period without benefits, while the household expenses continue to accumulate, is onerous. In British Columbia provincial income assistance or welfare is legislated in such a way as to be basically inaccessible for displaced forest workers. Owning a vehicle worth more than \$5,000 disqualifies one from even applying. Forcing people into extreme poverty before they can qualify for income assistance from the province puts them at a disadvantage when seeking retraining or new work.

Even for those eligible, backlogs within Service Canada often mean that files take more than 30 days after the two week waiting period to be processed. This means unemployed workers are going without income for a minimum of six weeks. This puts extreme stress on the family. For many laid off forestry workers, there are few, if any, opportunities to work locally, forcing them to go elsewhere. Older workers or those with health issues may find the demands of changing communities and careers in later life to be an extreme hardship. Leaving communities where homes have been purchased and extended families live, where medical support is in place and where children go to school has a ripple effect on the family and the community.

Some workers may have a partner or other family member who can assist them, while others are facing utter destitution. One worker came into my office and talked about his plans to live in his truck, in the bush, when his mortgage was foreclosed. He plans to start his vehicle periodically during the night to keep warm.

[Translation]

According to Mel Hurtig's book, *The Truth about Canada*, before the cuts by Brian Mulroney, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, more than 80% of unemployed workers received employment insurance benefits. In 1986, that figure was 86%. Today, only 40% are eligible and here, in Ottawa, only 21%. It is a disgrace.

And that is not all. Because of cuts at the provincial level by Mike Harris, Ralph Klein and Gordon Campbell, thousands do not have access to employment insurance and are forced to live on social assistance—if their vehicle is not worth more than \$5,000.

Between 1994 and 2006, the federal government accumulated a \$51 billion surplus in the employment insurance fund. However, in 2006, only 53% of unemployed workers qualified for benefits. Let us not forget that the federal government used the money accumulated by workers, that is to say our money, to reduce the federal deficit.

● (1335)

[English]

According to a *Toronto Star* article of February 25, 2007:

The benefit program must return to being a true insurance policy for those who lose their jobs, not a cash grab by the government at the expense of the most vulnerable in our midst.

In a list of 28 OECD countries, Canada is in 22nd place when one measures benefits in terms of the replacement rates of previous earnings. This is less than one-half that of countries such as Denmark, Finland, the U.K. and Australia.

According to Mel Hurtig, public opinion polls here in Canada show that Canadians put social programs near the top of the list of priorities, well ahead of tax cuts. What we are seeing in this budget is that corporate tax cuts outpace help through EI at a rate of 60 to 1. The target is to bring our corporate tax rate from 19.5% to 19% in 2009.

*The Budget*

As far back as 2005, in a list of 22 OECD countries, Canada was in 16th place in regard to the total tax rate as a percentage of profits, below the U.S., Austria and Japan. Our corporate taxes are already some of the lowest while our social infrastructure continues to crumble.

During my prebudget consultations many spoke of the need to reform EI in order to make it more accessible to those who are being hit hard. In a submission received from the Similkameen County Keremeos Chamber of Commerce, it states, "Unemployment insurance reform is long overdue and now is the time to address this".

It goes on and on. Canadians want a system they have paid into to work for them. It is absolutely unacceptable that in this time of crisis fewer than 40% of those who need help receive it. I have already underlined some cases of what happens to some of those 60% who are not eligible for EI, and our minister has the gall to say that we should not be making it lucrative for jobless workers to stay home.

Another major priority that was reflected during my prebudget consultation meetings with community leaders was that of infrastructure spending. The following points summarize some of the feedback I received.

First, the allocation of funds for infrastructure should be expanded and sped up, for example, the build Canada fund and the gas tax refunds, promised funds that have been held back long enough.

Second, economically challenged communities should be targeted for priority funding.

Third, there is strong support for the Federation of Communities and Municipalities' proposal to work with the federal government to create 100,000 jobs across Canada.

One fear that our small rural communities have is that they will be left out of the funding due to government requirements to match funds. Some communities in my riding, such as Greenwood, do not have enough resources and staff to go through the grant funding process let alone contribute a one-third share. It is my fear that the majority of infrastructure funding will go to big cities that have a strong tax base and that rural Canada will be left behind.

It is the duty of our federal government to ensure that all Canadian communities and the people living in them have the maximum amount of support to weather these tough economic times. They deserve no less.

• (1340)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, because the NDP member was not here at that time, I would like to clarify this for the record. He used three different figures, \$45 billion, \$51 billion, \$55 billion in terms of the surplus at EI. I just want to inform the member that back then, when the Liberal government took over, close to 12% of Canadians were unemployed and a lot of money was being paid out to unemployed Canadians. However, over the course of several years, three million jobs were created, thanks to good Liberal policy, which means that more revenue was coming in.

It is a fact that after the government addressed the payout need for the unemployed and the future, it took some of that money and put it

into debt retirement and deficit elimination, which saved money for the country. It was managed well by the Liberals.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Mr. Speaker, I guess the fact still remains that we have had a surplus that all of us, all the workers in Canada, have paid into that totalled something around, and we can dispute the figure, \$50 billion. Regardless of where the money went, it was their money that was put into this fund, and now, in these tough economic times, over 60% of the people who need it do not have access to it. Let us figure that one out.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we talked about tough times when the Liberals were in government. This is a budget of the present government but it cannot leave the Liberals behind because tonight there will be a coalition between the Liberals and the Conservatives, a new coalition.

The Liberals said that there were tough times and that they had to cut the employment insurance. Would the member for British Columbia Southern Interior agree with me that it is not by cutting the employment insurance that we help the country because the country is made up of people, of workers? Why does the government want to take away the earnings of workers who are trying to feed their families?

The government is proud that only 40% of workers who lose their jobs qualify for employment insurance. How could anybody be proud that a program, which workers pay into for a safety net, is being stolen from them? Is that not what is happening? Even if the government wants to pay the debt, does it pay it only on the backs of the workers, because it is a \$55 billion surplus? It was \$57 billion but the government took \$2 billion and put it in this new agency.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his concern.

It seems that our country over the last 20 years or so has been sliding downhill when it comes to a social net, the social net that so many developed countries today have. They have a social net, productivity, a strong workforce and strong investment. However, we, somehow, are sliding.

I would like to share with my colleagues in the House of Commons the book by Mel Hurtig, which is called *The Truth About Canada*. I would like them to read it to see what has been happening and to see if they have comments on some of these issues.

Yes, the money was paid by workers and the money, we could say, has been stolen from workers if they do not have access to it now. That is a shame on our country and a shame on how we treat our workers. I know we can do better.

• (1345)

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering.

Hon. colleagues, as I stand in this House to speak to the budget presented this past week by the Minister of Finance, I cannot help but think that we could have been having this debate two months ago.

*The Budget*

While it may be somewhat discouraging that the government would only feel motivated to act in response to a threat of its own political survival and not out of courage or concern for the millions of Canadian families, workers and business people who need assistance, at least we are now seeing some action from the government.

This situation is certainly challenging and of great concern.

Since the summer, we have watched as stock markets here at home and around the world literally lost millions of dollars in value right before our own eyes. This, of course, affects not only the companies and their employees, but also millions of people, including older Canadians who have invested in these institutions. Many Canadians look to these investments to see them through their retirement years.

In the manufacturing sector, we have seen for some time now the loss of jobs at levels not witnessed in decades. I have repeatedly joined with labour leaders and other members of the House for over two years now in calling for action to protect manufacturing jobs in this country.

Retailers across Canada are now facing unprecedented challenges just to survive and many have already cut jobs in the wake of falling sales.

We are all aware of the significant and ongoing pressures facing the automotive sector. The Canadian Auto Workers union has for several years now been warning about the dire situation in one of the largest economic engines of our economy, automobile manufacturing.

In addition to the challenges here in Canada, we are clearly affected by the circumstances confronting our neighbour to the south, the United States.

I am pleased to congratulate President Barack Obama as he begins his term leading our largest trading partner.

We in Canada do not live in a vacuum and situations south of the border impact us very directly as we conduct 80% of our trade with the United States. It is an inescapable reality that policies of the former administration contributed to the economic woes facing the U.S. and the world. The trigger to the current economic dire straits was, of course, the United States' housing market and the lack of regulations and control with respect to lending.

If there is any bright spot in terms of the financial services sectors, it is that in our country the prudent management of the previous Liberal government spared us from some of the seismic collapse we have witnessed in the U.S. and other western countries.

Despite pressures to the contrary, the government of former Prime Ministers Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin understood the need to ensure that our banking system required stringent regulatory control. It is easy to forget now the calls for bank mergers and relaxed lending regulations that the then Liberal government refused to accede to and it is also true that we are fortunate that leaders like Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin possessed such foresight and political courage.

As financial institutions around the world, in particular in the U.S., teeter on the precipice of survival, Canada's financial system, while under stress, is essentially sound.

In the weeks leading up to the return of this Parliament, the government continuously disseminated information on the content of its budget. The creation of a deficit was first among the so-called leaks. Then we saw announcements of forthcoming infrastructure spending, employment support programs, assistance to struggling industries and a variety of other initiatives. In short, those were many of the things that we in the official opposition were calling for since the beginning of the economic downturn.

In that regard, there are measures within the budget that our leader, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, our caucus and me personally find we must support at this time. Canadians simply cannot wait any longer for this support and certainly not for purely political reasons.

• (1350)

I must say it is distressing to hear the leader of the New Democratic Party speaking of a new coalition. I would ask him to put aside his own ambition and recognize that there is really one coalition that matters, the one between the people of Canada and those they have chosen to work on their behalf. Canadians need help, not more political games. When the opposition parties formed the coalition in November, it was about more than politics. It was about holding an irresponsible government to account for its own highly political rhetoric.

The Leader of the Opposition has shown courage and put the needs of Canadians first by announcing support for the budget. He has also shown great leadership in tempering that support with the amendment that was passed last night, an amendment that will ensure real and meaningful help is delivered to Canadians.

We simply must have economic stimulus. One of the most effective ways to deliver this kind of financial assistance is through infrastructure renewal. The budget does contain significant commitments in this regard, if indeed these funds flow in a manner that will see road construction, bridge construction and so forth. These projects are too important to come with strings attached.

The Conservative government cannot create infrastructure opportunities through the building Canada fund and then let the opportunities fall by the wayside when cities cannot afford to contribute one-third of the expenses. Toronto mayor David Miller has already made it clear that Toronto does not have the cash for the revitalization of Union Station, which the Minister of Finance referred to as a "crucial commuter hub". The Conservatives must ensure that infrastructure funds are accessible to all and are not merely political window dressing.

The Liberal amendment is, as noted, designed to do this.

Likewise, the commitments to affordable housing are important. I would remind many in the House that it was the previous Liberal government's finance minister, the member for Wascana, who had made commitments in this area for the first time in decades. Nonetheless, this budget contains provisions for affordable housing. This is a significant improvement and an important one.

*The Budget*

We are also encouraged by the support for low income earners through the expansion of the child tax benefits and the working income tax benefit. These also are long overdue.

The financial commitments aimed toward our educational institutions are very much needed. I am supportive of these provisions as they will deliver long-needed assistance to these institutions.

If we are to recover economically, then we need a stimulus that will create jobs, restore confidence and assist Canadians in meeting the unique challenges of this time. The so-called spin-off effect from economic stimulus ranges from the purchase of building supplies to spending undertaken by those working in the construction sector.

There are things to find encouraging in this budget. The government has included some of what we have been calling for over the past two years. Regardless of who gets the credit, it is important that we just move forward in assisting Canadians and the Canadian economy.

I would like to take a moment to point out some areas that I believe have not been addressed and which require attention.

Senior citizens in my riding and across the country are facing very difficult times. Living on fixed incomes they must contend with a multitude of challenges. For example, in my city of Toronto many older residents are facing increased property taxes at a time when they can least afford it.

While recognizing property taxes are municipal and provincial issues, the reality is that older Canadians on fixed incomes are contending with these increased costs. There is much we can do at the federal level to assist them. This can be achieved in the form of increased support through the tax system or through the guaranteed income supplement. Regardless of how it is done, we must assist those who have contributed to building our country and who now need our help.

The previous Liberal government was moving forward to meet many of the long-term challenges facing Canadians. Sustainable and stable funding was flowing to working Canadian families, our cities, our important manufacturing sectors, and the list goes on.

We also need to improve the employment insurance system to make it fairer and more responsive, create a real national child care system and deliver on employment equity to name but a few areas. While the budget contains many important items, we need to move forward in the direction we were heading under the previous Liberal government.

Now is the time when we need full cooperation between all levels of government, new and invigorated relations between various parties and a progressive approach to leading the country. The current economic realities require immediate and short-term support.

• (1355)

I would remind members of the words of the writer James Freeman Clarke who stated, "The difference between a politician and a statesman is: a politician thinks of the next election and a statesman thinks of the next generation."

As we conclude debate on the budget, we need to work together and put aside partisan actions like those we witnessed last November from the government. We need to move forward with this budget.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Davenport started off his speech by saying that we could have had this debate two months ago. He is absolutely right because we are no further ahead today than we were at the end of November.

Never have the Conservatives been let off so easily. Never have they been given such a bargain as we have seen with the Liberals holding their feet to the fire. My goodness, could the Liberals get any tougher than saying to the Conservatives that they want regular reports about how this supposed anti-recession package is doing? What did the Liberals get from the Conservatives for that kind of tough talk? Why did we hear from the Liberals this tough talk and then they wimped out completely?

I want to know from the member how it is that he is not at all upset with the fact that there have been no improvements to employment insurance, no investment in child care, no investment in a green economy, and infrastructure with serious problems? There is no real stimulus package that is going to help Canadians in the worst of economic times.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleague and the House that at one time there was a government that brought forward a budget which invested in housing, which invested in child care, which invested in our cities. I checked the records and it was the NDP that actually brought down that government and decided to have the Conservatives in power. Let us not rewrite history.

There was a time when we were moving on those issues. We were speaking to those issues that she is now speaking about. We were actually doing things for Canadians, but at that time, the NDP chose to have an election and that party got the House that it asked for.

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has given us a good idea as to how we find ourselves in the current situation.

The government has been dragged kicking and screaming into providing what I think is a Liberal budget. Obviously there is more that needs to be done.

With the member's particular background and expertise in areas like infrastructure, I would like to know how he sees the disposition of the finances and how important that is going to be in terms of getting the projects done quickly. Will he be watching to see if those projects are immediately acted upon, especially for our friends in Toronto?

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Speaker, it is important that we get moving on infrastructure. Municipalities all across Canada will be looking to the budget to see what type of stimulus they will be able to get.

An evaluation has been done on the infrastructure needs of my own city of Toronto and it is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100 billion. Obviously, it is not realistic to expect any budget to deal with those issues, but it is a testament to the fact that cities across this country, and particularly my city of Toronto, face serious infrastructure challenges. Mayor David Miller has complained repeatedly about the fact that the building Canada fund is full of red tape and the money is not flowing to municipalities to kick-start their projects.

If we want to get the economy going and if we want to invest in infrastructure, which makes sense because it is needed and is valuable to this country, we have to make sure that there is no red tape and that the money flows to municipalities.

My leader, my party and I are committed to making sure that we are on top of these issues, that we keep after the government to make sure that the money flows to the municipalities and communities that need those infrastructure funds. That is what we will be doing. I look forward to that, because our cities and our communities will not survive unless they get money to kick-start the infrastructure projects within their communities.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### FESTIVAL DU VOYAGEUR 2009

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to pay tribute to the Festival du Voyageur which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

This world-class festival takes place annually in my riding of Saint Boniface, which is also home to one of the largest French speaking communities in western Canada.

Manitobans and people from across the country will come to celebrate the heritage of both the French and Métis cultures through food, song and dance. The festival, which includes exhibits, entertainment, sled dog races and world-class snow sculptures, focuses around the fur trade era and will take place from February 13 to 22.

[Translation]

The Festival du Voyageur is a huge success thanks to the hard work and dedication of hundreds of volunteers and to the thousands of people who attend each year.

I am very proud to say that the festival is even more special to me this year because I am now the member for the riding. It is an honour and a privilege to represent the people of Saint Boniface.

[English]

Come join us at Festival du Voyageur 2009.

## Statements by Members

### ELIO ROSATI

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to mark the life of Elio Rosati, who recently passed away.

Elio was a first generation Italian immigrant who was only a young man when his father's homeland went to war with his new-found country. Elio joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and flew submarine patrols over the Atlantic before engaging Canada's enemies in the skies above Burma.

For nearly half a century Elio Rosati was a fixture in Toronto's Italian community. In 1976 he and his wife, Jackie, helped to build and open the beautiful Columbus Centre and Villa Columbo, a community centre and seniors complex.

Elio was a veteran, a leader and a doer. He pursued no task without passion, yet he was often most proud to speak to me about his gardening. The roots that Elio planted in York South—Weston will continue to benefit our community and our country.

I say *grazie mille* to Elio for a life well lived. I know that members of the House join with me in extending our nation's thanks and condolences to his wife Jackie.

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[Translation]

### SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, four of our fellow citizens will die by suicide, joining the more than 14,600 Quebecers who have died by suicide during the last 10 years, and these deaths have left behind more than half a million grieving people.

Suicide is the leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 19 and it affects all regions of Quebec.

We believe that through concerted, coherent and intensive action, we can combat this phenomenon by making sure that all people in need have access to the effective resources they need.

We do not want suicide to take away any more of our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, other relatives, friends, colleagues, neighbours or students.

We believe that when it comes to suicide, education and awareness are everyone's responsibility. If we take a stand, we can make a difference.

“You are important to us. Suicide is not an option”. That is the message of the Quebec suicide prevention association.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives' human resources minister claimed that increasing employment insurance benefits would "make it lucrative for them to stay home and get paid for it", she did not just expose her own ignorance. No, she revealed how little the Conservative government and its Liberal dance partners care for workers who lose their jobs during this recession.

EI is not charity. It is an insurance program that every employed worker has to pay into, and people expect that insurance will be there for them when they lose their jobs. But 70% of women and 60% of men do not even qualify any more. My office in Hamilton is hearing from people who applied in November and still have not heard anything. Perhaps the minister should focus on clearing these huge backlogs instead of talking nonsense.

Canadian workers are worried about their next paycheque. They are struggling to protect their families, their homes and the lives they have built. The last thing they need is to hear insults, ignorance and innuendo from their own government.

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**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for more than a decade, war has ravaged the eastern Congo in a conflict that has largely been forgotten by the western world. An estimated 5.4 million people have perished, a number that increases by some 1,000 lives every day.

The conflict in the Congo does not have the same geopolitical or domestic political significance that other conflicts may have. It does not have an evil, imperialistic western power for the western press to vilify. It is merely a local conflict about greed and the lust for power, but that does not mean it deserves to be forgotten.

It is important that we remember that the purpose of Canadian foreign policy is ultimately to advance Canadian values throughout the world.

The Government of Canada has acted in the region in both a diplomatic and humanitarian fashion and will continue to act in the future. It is important that these efforts be redoubled so that the Congo comes to a final peace.

It is too late to change the past, but let us not forget it. Let us not forget the people of the eastern Congo who so desperately need our help.

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●(1405)

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in recognition of the 13th anniversary of Black History Month. Let us take time to celebrate the achievements and contributions of African-Canadians and remember the journey of the past.

There was a time in the seventeenth century when a young African boy, Olivier Le Jeune, was brought over as a slave, a time in Canada when slavery existed, where there was white supremacy and black subordination.

We fast forward to today and the Black community in my own riding of Brampton comprises the third largest visible minority community. We have seen first-hand the Black community achieve great success with their faith, perseverance and determination.

As the world celebrates the first African-American president, we here in Canada also have our own success stories with our Governor General, the Right Hon. Michaëlle Jean; the first black member of Parliament, who became the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Lincoln Alexander; and trailblazers such as the former member of Parliament and minister, the Hon. Jean Augustine, who introduced the motion to recognize Black History Month.

We as a nation are enriched by the contributions of the Black community, their hard work and—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

\* \* \*

**HOCKEYVILLE**

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate my constituents in the town of Lincoln who have been recognized as a top 10 finalist in the 2009 Kraft hockeyville competition. I want to wish them the best of luck as they attempt to become a top five finalist.

Sponsored by Kraft Canada, the CBC and the NHL, the hockeyville contest pits communities across Canada against each other in a friendly competition to determine which community best embodies the hockeyville-loving spirit and becomes known as true hockeyville.

I feel that the town of Lincoln, as a proud small-town community of hockey lovers, definitely deserves to win this competition. I salute the community's leaders, especially Jim Borsodi, who have organized the many events and pep rallies that have resulted in Lincoln's success to date.

I would like to urge all members to vote for the town of Lincoln in the next round so it makes it through, as it continues in its quest to become a champion, the winner of Kraft hockeyville 2009.

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[Translation]

**DAIRY FARMERS OF CANADA**

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this year, the Dairy Farmers of Canada are celebrating their 75th anniversary. I would like to congratulate them and encourage them to persevere with their important work of defending this vital sector of Quebec agriculture. As a dairy farmer, I am pleased that there exists such a representative and strong organization.

Given that they are here today, I would like to reiterate my personal commitment, and that of the Bloc Québécois, to promoting and defending supply management. Producers working under supply management need protection to compete with farmers in other countries who are subsidized. Supply management is a fair agricultural model, which ensures that our agriculture, particularly dairy production, remains viable.

Therefore, it is vital that this House once again demonstrate its intention to defend supply management, as stated in the Bloc Québécois motion adopted unanimously on November 22, 2005.

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[English]

### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the midst of a global economic slowdown, our Conservative government is on top of the economy and focused on the long-term.

On January 27, the Minister of Finance tabled Canada's economic action plan to create jobs and stimulate the economy. The five year plan includes billions of dollars over the next two years in new and accelerated infrastructure spending.

Three days later, our government delivered more than \$24 million in new money for roads, bridges and drinking water to communities across Alberta. The federal contribution leveraged money from the province and municipalities, creating \$78 million in stimulus to rural communities. This government understands the tough economic times and we are moving quickly to stimulate our economy.

In my riding of Wetaskiwin, two local road projects were approved for a total of \$3.7 million. The new roads will improve safety and travel times for local residents, and the acceleration of the projects will provide much needed jobs for construction crews that have been hit hard by the downturn in the oil and gas sector.

Times may be tough, but our Conservative government is on top of the economy and following through with our economic action plan.

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• (1410)

### RCMP

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a week ago the Conservative government had an opportunity to fix a grave injustice and stand up for members of the RCMP. It failed to do so. In fact, the government continued to show disrespect to the police officers who stand on duty for us every day.

I know from the silence across the way that Conservative MPs are embarrassed by Treasury Board's unilateral decision to roll back a promised wage increase.

RCMP officers are deeply disappointed with this betrayal. One officer stated, "From coast to coast, members of the RCMP are disillusioned following this breakdown of trust with the [Conservative] government. This is the ultimate insult for RCMP members—".

### Statements by Members

How can the Conservatives square their actions with their tough talk about tackling crime? It is time they stood up for our Mounties.

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[Translation]

### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has one priority, and that is to protect Canada during this world economic recession.

Young families are at the core of our economy. They represent this country's future. This is why we are giving them particular attention in the 2009 budget, our plan of action and economic stimulus.

To families in Bellechasse, Lévis and les Etchemins who work for Exceldor in Saint-Anselme, Rotobec in Sainte-Justine, Équipements Laliberté in Sainte-Claire, for la Maison Crowin bakers of Sainte-Rose, or for Scierie Audet, we are offering a residential renovation credit of up to \$1,350 for home renovations, up to \$750 reimbursement of costs relating to the purchase of a new home, or the possibility of withdrawing an additional \$5,000 from their RRSPs for the purchase or construction of a first home.

I am proud to support this Conservative budget, which serves Canadian families first and foremost, and that is why I am calling upon all hon. members to follow suit and support, on this occasion at least, this 2009 budget.

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[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the economic downturn of the past six months has skewered the manufacturing heart of our country. The falling of commodity prices from their heights of last spring is chewing up the economies of all regions across our country.

Northern Canada is no exception to this. From diamond mining to exploration for new minerals, from the service industries to aviation, trucking and expediting of the oil and gas work in the Mackenzie Valley, the situation is grim and getting grimmer. Our laid-off northern workers are facing higher northern costs of living and unsatisfactory employment insurance benefits. Our businesses are struggling to stay alive.

Unfortunately, an upturn in commodity prices may not be the panacea we are hoping for. Higher commodity prices mean a higher Canadian dollar and downward pressure on the U.S. dollar. Higher energy prices will spur inflation not only here but also in the U.S.

The failure of this government to be honest with Canadians has hurt us already. Let us be realistic. Free market ideology will not provide leadership. It is time for Parliament to lead Canadians forward with a clear plan for the economy.

*Oral Questions***BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Black History Month and to celebrate the rich cultural legacy Black Canadians have contributed to Canada.

Black Canadians of African, Caribbean or Latin American descent have distinguished themselves and shaped the Canada that we celebrate today. Whether it was Mathieu Da Costa, who served as an interpreter to the governor of Nova Scotia in the 1600s; or William Hall, who in 1857 was Canada's first black Victoria Cross recipient; or John Ware, a legendary rancher who brought the first cattle to southern Alberta, laying the foundation for Alberta's beef industry. Finally, the contributions of Lincoln Alexander, who was Canada's first black member of Parliament and the first black viceregal in Canada when he served as Ontario's 24th Lieutenant Governor.

This is truly a time to reflect upon the historic and recent contributions of Black Canadians. I encourage all members and all Canadians to take part in the many events planned throughout the month, such as Oshawa's Club Carib Black History Month variety concert this Saturday.

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[Translation]

**NATIONAL BATTLEFIELDS COMMISSION**

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we have learned that André Juneau, Chair of the National Battlefields Commission, that ardent federalist and defender of Canadian visibility back in the sponsorship era, has been planning a re-enactment of the battle of the Plains of Abraham for the past ten years or so.

Today the Conservatives are defending exactly what Jean Chrétien was defending back in the sponsorship era: shoving Canada down Quebecers' throats by any means possible.

Let this government show the respect that it owes to the Quebec nation and let it call upon the National Battlefields Commission to immediately cancel this celebration of the Conquest. There is a limit to how far anyone can go in mocking a nation's people.

If the Conservatives want to remind us that Quebec was conquered, the Bloc Québécois wants to remind everyone that Quebecers are still standing today, in fact standing stronger than ever.

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● (1415)

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, history teaches us that protectionism can spread like a cancer. It can turn a severe recession into a depression.

This government has failed to fight protectionism in general and to defend Canada against the protectionist threats coming from the U.S. Congress.

[English]

Rather than have our ambassador write a letter to U.S. senators after the offending provisions had passed through the House, the

government should have been actively lobbying Congress before the deed was done. It failed to understand that it is easier to nip these things in the bud than to stop protectionist measures that have already built up a head of steam.

The government has been blindsided and asleep at the switch. Why, at this time of economic crisis, did this Conservative government not stand up for Canadian jobs?

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**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new capital cost allowance measure is a valuable tool for businesses to temporarily deduct 100% of the cost of new computers for the next two years. The measure will help to boost productivity through the faster adoption of new technology.

Businesses in all sectors of the economy will benefit from this incentive. It is yet one more way that our economic action plan allows businesses to strengthen their bottom line, leaving more room for investment, and positioning themselves for the future. It is the kind of short-term targeted tax relief that will help Canadian companies to get through this period of global uncertainty.

Our government is proud of this measure and the other steps we have taken in Canada's economic action plan to stimulate our economy, protect those hardest hit by the global recession, and ensure that we exit this global economic turmoil still the strongest in the G7, stronger than we went in, stronger for all Canadians.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[Translation]

**TRADE**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, this government's ambassador wrote a letter to the U.S. senate about protectionist measures included in the American stimulus package. Yesterday was too late.

Thousands of Canadian jobs and over \$5 billion in exports are in danger.

Why did the government wait so long to act? Why did it not write a letter before the House of Representatives decided to pass these measures?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the American political process is very long and complicated. Our diplomats are working very hard to protect our interests. The measures in the U.S. Congress' stimulus package raise serious concerns for everyone, for all G20 members and for all industrialized nations. We will obviously be pursuing our efforts to change that decision before the end of the process.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the government got involved, things have gone from bad to worse. Measures are now aimed not only at Canadian iron and steel, but also at manufactured imports used in public works projects. The bill now before the senate is likely to pass.

What is the government asking the administration to do about the bill once it goes through? Is the government pointing out to the administration that the measures violate long-standing treaties with an ally, a partner and a friend?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be absolutely clear. These are not measures targeted at Canada. They are measures that are of concern to all trading partners of the United States.

At the G20 meeting, as the member will know, we all agreed that we had to have a global response to the recession, which would include stimulus packages in all major countries and the avoidance of protectionism, and certainly not protectionism in a stimulus package.

Our officials at all levels have been in consultation with their counterparts in the American Obama administration. We believe they share many of our concerns.

• (1420)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this side of the House wants to know when the Prime Minister is going to pick up the phone. Protectionist measures will harm U.S. businesses that depend on Canadian imports. We used to be able to mount an effective campaign to rally American support to our side: public diplomacy, remember that.

Why have we lost influence with Washington under the government? What will the government do to regain that influence?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is the government that fixed the softwood lumber dispute with which the previous government could not deal. This is the government that dealt with the BSE issue. This is the government, due to the hard work of our diplomats, that recently got changes to the country of origin labelling. This government and the diplomats of this government have been on top of this issue, weeks before the official opposition even heard about it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I asked the government how it planned to protect the aerospace industry from the crisis long before it came to its senses and proposed an economic stimulus package. I am still waiting for an answer. I did not see anything about it in the budget. Yesterday, Bell Helicopter laid off hundreds of workers.

Why do the Conservatives not have a plan for the aerospace industry?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government certainly does support that sector. The aerospace industry is doing well in Quebec. Lockheed Martin announced over

#### Oral Questions

\$660 million in spending in the province. In early January, I announced a \$52.3 million investment in CMC.

[English]

There is a lot of investment going on in this sector by our government and by the private sector. We continue to support this sector.

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in last fall's election campaign, the Conservatives promised an injection of \$200 million into the very important technology development program known as SADI, the strategic aerospace and defence initiative. However, this promised funding was not mentioned in Tuesday's budget.

As we know, this initiative is essential to maintaining Canada's very competitive position in the aerospace sector. Why was there no mention of this important program in the budget?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** In fact, Mr. Speaker, we are fully committed to SADI and will be making announcements in due course. The economic action plan invested additional moneys. We have invested over \$150 million to date with SADI. The Canadian Space Agency, which the hon. member knows well, got an additional \$110 million from the economic plan.

We are on top of these issues, as the Prime Minister mentioned on a previous question, and on this question as well.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) said a few days ago that it was impossible to help the forestry industry without violating the softwood lumber agreement. But loan guarantees and refundable tax credits for research and development do not violate WTO and NAFTA rules or the softwood lumber agreement.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the fact that his budget contains no measures for the forestry industry has nothing to do with the softwood lumber agreement but instead reflects his insensitivity toward the crisis in the forestry industry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have measures tailored to the individual, unique circumstances in every industry and community. A spokesperson for the Forest Products Association of Canada had this to say about the budget: "The government has clearly heard the message and embraced our vision of becoming the producers of the best quality, most innovative and greenest forest products in the world." The Bloc should support those measures.

*Oral Questions*

● (1425)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister certainly did not read the statement by the forestry industry in Quebec, which roundly condemned his budget. We are here for Quebec, and we know whose side he is on. He says that the budget has something for everyone, yet he has given \$2.7 billion to the automotive industry, which is concentrated in Ontario, but only a few million to the manufacturing and forestry industries across Canada. Again this morning, we learned that Bell Helicopter was cutting 500 jobs.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, for strictly partisan reasons, he favoured Ontario, where the automotive industry is concentrated, at the expense of Quebec?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is the sectarianism Mr. Sarkozy talks about.

The budget provides \$1 billion for the community adjustment fund, another \$1 billion for the community development trust, money to boost forestry industry competitiveness and other money for FPInnovations, research and development, the Canadian wood fibre centre and renewable energy, biomass and biofuel. I could go on, but the Bloc should support that.

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**HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development made some extremely disparaging comments regarding unemployed workers when she said that the government did not want to make it lucrative for them to stay at home and get paid for it.

Does the minister understand that she insulted thousands of workers who, through no fault of their own, lost their jobs or will lose them in the coming months? And does she intend to apologize?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always sad anytime someone loses their job or is laid off. That is why our economic action plan includes a number of measures to help those people, regardless of their age. We want them to be able to work and we will give them the opportunity to take extensive training. It is the Bloc Québécois that wants to impede this.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as we can see, the minister continues to show her contempt by wrongfully opposing retraining measures and an income support program for older workers. The reality is that there are also workers aged 55 and older who cannot be retrained.

I challenge the minister here today to travel through Quebec with me and to go to Lebel-sur-Quévillon in particular to explain her twisted logic to the older workers. Will she accept my challenge? I repeat; will she accept this challenge, yes or no?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we launched the targeted initiative for older workers two or three years ago in order to help such people. That program has been very successful and we have expanded it considerably in our economic action plan, in order to support these people even further.

However, I wonder why a gentleman of a certain age would have a colleague who said:

[English]

“Will the Minister of Finance admit that older workers cannot be retrained to work in other areas?”

[Translation]

We have faith in our workers, regardless of their age.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TRADE**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister is no doubt aware, the United States has had a buy American act for 76 years. It is perfectly legal under the World Trade Organization. In fact, under NAFTA, governments are allowed to buy at home in order to use taxpayer money to create jobs for workers and to support communities and their industries. Mexico, China, Japan and South Korea all have national procurement policies. It would be a good idea for Canada.

Could the Prime Minister tell us what is wrong with a buy Canadian policy, as permitted under continental and global trade rules?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we believe strongly that the proposals before the American Congress violate its trade obligations. We have a global slowdown. All the countries of the G20 have committed themselves to working together to provide stimulus packages to stimulate not just their own economies, but the world economy.

The leader of the NDP suggests we respond to this by starting a trade war with the United States. This is not advice that we will be taking.

● (1430)

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, it is a golden opportunity right now to pursue a two-track strategy that would involve the synchronizing of North American policies on key issues like the establishment of a carbon exchange regime with the Obama administration and also to boost slumping domestic sales with a perfectly legal and appropriately designed buy Canadian strategy.

Instead of spreading fear and making threats, why does the Prime Minister not step up to the plate and stand up for Canada's industries and workers and communities?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP asks what would be wrong with policies that have us just buy here. What is wrong with it is we are a world trading leader. We can compete with the best in the world. We can sell around the world and we want to sell around the world. That is what our policy is designed to have us do.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's explanations are not logical, they are ideological. And that is another reason why, unlike the Liberal Party, we cannot have confidence in this government during this economic crisis.

Rather than attempting to scare people “with threats of trade wars”, why does the Prime Minister not ask President Obama to come and discuss trade policy by inviting him to address Parliament when he visits Canada?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the greatest ideological threat at this time is the threat of protectionism. That is the inherent danger in the bill before the American Congress and it is the reason why we oppose such measures. We intend to encourage free trade here and throughout the world.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, American protectionist measures will place thousands of Canadian jobs in jeopardy. The Conservative government's response was to simply send a letter, through Ambassador Wilson, to the Senate leaders.

How many members of the Democratic Congress has the Minister of International Trade met with since being appointed?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is strange that my friend says that all we did was send a letter. We actually sent many letters and we have asked for commitments from the Americans at many levels. And what results have we obtained? Many, but I will only mention one: the spokesperson for the U.S. President publicly stated that the Americans have heard our concerns and wish to do something. We have achieved results.

[English]

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fairness to the Conservative minister, it is tough to meet Democrats in Congress if one does not actually know any. The Conservative government has been so focused on fawning over the Bush Republicans that it has completely ignored the Democrats, who now control both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Why did the Conservatives so badly neglect the Democrats and allow their narrow ideological partisan focus to hurt Canada's national interest?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, at a time when we would appreciate some non-partisan collaboration on this issue, we get ill-informed diatribe.

We are corresponding with and dealing with elected people on a number of levels. I guess the member opposite conveniently missed it when the Democratic house leader himself publicly said that he is aware of our concerns because of our contact and that he realizes some of these concerns are justified. The Democratic house leader in the United States has taken issue with our concerns in a positive way. The member opposite should be a little more positive and helpful in his comments.

### Oral Questions

#### CHALK RIVER NUCLEAR FACILITIES

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last year Conservative incompetence caused a critical shortage in medical isotopes that risked and disrupted the lives of thousands of Canadians and patients around the world. A year later, Canadians and their doctors need to know if the government has a plan to ensure a secure supply of medical isotopes. Can the new minister tell Canadians the plan to ensure that this medical crisis never happens again?

• (1435)

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that the medical community and Canadians get the isotope supplies they need. At Canada's request, a meeting was recently held in Paris, France, to discuss global solutions concerning the ongoing supply of medical isotopes.

I and my colleague, the Minister of Health, have been clear that ensuring a reliable source of medical isotopes is a global issue and warrants a global response. Our government's top priority has always been, and will continue to be, the health and safety of Canadians.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, another year, another Conservative crisis at Chalk River. The minister has refused to tell us how much radioactive tritium was released at Chalk River. She has refused to tell us what she was told on December 6. She will not even tell us what the status of the leak is, nor its cause, and she will not explain why, over a week after these leaks began, she informed Canadians that isotope production was “reliable”.

What is reliable about producing isotopes in a facility while it is leaking radioactive water?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just indicated, the health and safety of Canadians has always been our number one priority. As I have indicated many times in the House already, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has assured me that at no time was the public or the environment at risk and that there is no radioactive material leaking into the Ottawa River. These are very important facts. The health and safety of Canadians has always been our number one priority and will continue to be so.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment said that the Bloc position is inconsistent because it wants companies to have the opportunity to be listed on the European carbon exchange and on a potential North American exchange. The minister should know that a company can be listed on more than one exchange, that is not the problem.

Does the minister understand that it is the lack of clear rules in the Conservative plans that is keeping Quebec companies from benefiting from the major advantages of carbon exchanges?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not the case and the Bloc does not understand that we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions through new technologies. Solution CO<sub>2</sub>, on the other hand, is a Quebec company devoted to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This company understood and applauded the budget. The member should align his opinions with that of Solution CO<sub>2</sub> and congratulate us.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we prefer to side with the opinion of Quebeckers.

The Quebec government is asking the federal government to catch up. Only a real Minister of the Environment understands environmental issues, but we have a minister who is on the oil companies' payroll. That is what we have.

Does the minister, the spokesman for the oil sands, realize that it is his government's lack of absolute targets and its abandonment of 1990 as the base year that is hurting Quebec companies, Quebec's economy and the environment?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we clearly disagree, and I will talk about this with Ms. Beauchamp, the Quebec minister. Once again, the member should read the budget carefully. In this budget, there is plenty of money for clean energy projects, technologies such as carbon capture and others. That is more than any previous government has done.

\* \* \*

**CULTURE**

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government cut programs that enabled our artists to travel abroad, but in its budget, it invented a new \$25 million program, the Canada prizes for the arts and creativity, that will bring foreign artists here and give them money. That is completely ridiculous and absolutely illogical.

Does the minister fail to understand that, logically, before we spend money to bring foreign artists here, we should be funding our own artists so that they can showcase their work abroad?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague does not understand the details of the Canada prizes for the arts and creativity.

This is a huge victory for our country's cultural sector. This program is based in Toronto. Had it been based in Montreal, she would probably have been proud of the prizes. This is a huge victory for our country's cultural sector.

Internationally, we are investing over \$21 million to help our artists. We are investing money to help our international artists, even though the Bloc Québécois wants to vote against it.

• (1440)

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister can go on tooting his own horn about his budget, but despite his misrepresentations, artists will not forget that their foreign touring program was cut by \$45 million.

If the minister does not want to take care of artists, if he does not want to help them travel and showcase their work abroad, then why not transfer all of those powers and budgets to the Government of Quebec?

We Quebeckers would take care of business.

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague does not understand this at all. This year, our government will invest \$2.3 billion in our artists. This budget includes \$276 million in new funding for our artists. That money is for theatres, libraries, small museums, the national arts training contribution program, dance, music, theatre, access to magazines, the Canadian Television Fund, historic site restoration, and the Quebec City Armoury. These are the things they are voting against.

We are keeping the promises we made to Canadian artists even though the Bloc is voting against that.

\* \* \*

[English]

**FRAUDULENT LONG DISTANCE CALLS**

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, businesses across Canada are being victimized by long distance calling scams. At least one firm has received a monthly bill in excess of \$200,000. Bell Canada has indicated that customers must pay for these fraudulent calls.

In this period of economic difficulty, why has the government failed to act? What action can we now expect that the government is prepared to take in order to prevent Canadian businesses from going under and being ruined?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I can report to the House is that we are concerned about these actions. They are fraudulent actions. They are criminal offences. We are always concerned when we hear about cases such as this. They are fraudulent and illegal activities. They hurt consumers, and we encourage anyone affected to report this experience to their carrier or to the RCMP, so that the RCMP can make their judgment call on whether this is an offence they wish to pursue.

[Translation]

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what will it take to get this government to act against this fraud?

We already have the technology to detect this type of call.

Will the government at last stop making excuses and instead make an immediate commitment to work with the communications sector to protect Canadian businesses from these frauds, the way the banks protect debit and credit cards? Those are two examples to follow.

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are always concerned when there are cases of fraud or illicit activity, especially when they affect consumers. We encourage anyone affected to report their experience to Bell or the RCMP.

[English]

### SRI LANKA

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a telephone text message from a United Nations worker in a Red Cross hospital in northeastern Sri Lanka uses these words:

Women and kids wards shelled. God, no words. Still counting the dead bodies.

I would like to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs, where is Canada's voice in all of this? Why have we lost our voice? Why are we not calling for an international humanitarian ceasefire, as are so many other countries in the world?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact we have been extremely active on this file, contrary to what the member for Toronto Centre is saying.

Actually, on Monday of this week I had the opportunity of speaking with the foreign minister from Sri Lanka to impress upon him our deep concern with what is taking place in that part of his country and to make sure that every assistance possible be given to the United Nations in their efforts to make sure the humanitarian aid is brought.

• (1445)

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the United Nations, the European Union and the Secretary-General of the UN, and now Norway, the US and Japan, are all calling for a humanitarian ceasefire to protect people's lives.

Where is Canada's voice in this? Why has Canada not spoken out about this disaster and why is Canada not speaking out to protect these people?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is again not mentioning everything Canada is doing. As I have said, I have had the opportunity of speaking with the foreign minister of that country. It must be kept in mind also that we have, as a government, provided assistance to the people of that country; we have done so through CIDA. We have also approached the United Nations in support of their humanitarian aid.

\* \* \*

[English]

### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week in Canada's economic action plan the Minister of Finance announced a new 100% capital cost allowance for computer purchases for businesses. This capital cost allowance shows yet again how the Conservative government helps to support small and medium-sized business in Canada.

Could the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism tell us about the benefits for small and medium size businesses in Canada's economic action plan?

**Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Abbotsford for an excellent question. Organizational Metrics, a dynamic Ottawa-based company, is an example of how businesses will benefit from

### Oral Questions

the new measures allowing 100% writeoff of computer and software purchases over the next two years.

CEO Scott Murray says that this 100% CCA will allow them to hire additional staff and increase the amount they spend on marketing.

Our government is proud of this measure and others in the economic action plan to stimulate our economy, protect those hardest hit by the global recession and ensure we emerge even stronger.

\* \* \*

### STEEL INDUSTRY

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not get it when it comes to the real problems facing Canada's steel industry. There is no sectoral strategy for steel and no procurement policy for our own industry. If the government is really concerned about protecting the Canadian steel industry, it should look into the real problem of having sweatshop steel dumped into our market from the Third World.

Will the government stand up for Canadian workers and address the real problems with the steel trade, instead of picking ideological fights with the U.S. President?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be farther from the truth. This government, through its actions in the economic plan and through its actions in the budget, is focused on our business opportunities. It is focused on making sure small and medium-sized enterprises and sectors such as steel are looked after.

That is why we have the capital cost allowance measures that the Finance Minister introduced, that is why we have the tax reductions, and that is why we have the stimulus package that is found in the budget. This budget is for our economy. It is for every constituent and component of our economy, and that is why we support this budget. Other members should too.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, why will the government not just admit that it has dropped the ball on this file?

For years we have known that the real problem with steel production is actually from the dumping of low wage steel from the third world. However, instead of bringing in a sectoral strategy, the government has chosen to wag its fingers at the U.S.

Why does the government not move to bring in measures like buy Canada to build our steel industry here in Canada?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that some issues should attract some partisan support. When we are dealing with issues of trade on an international basis and protectionism, I would hope that members of the House would be a little bit more informed than what we are hearing from the member opposite.

*Oral Questions*

Chinese steel products coming into Canada related to dumping issues is of great concern to us, which is precisely why we have applied the protest through the dispute settlement mechanism. We are going after them on a dispute on the dumping of steel. The member should get informed on the issues.

\* \* \*

• (1450)

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, regarding the contaminated water in Shannon, the City of Quebec wants to reassure the public and, in order to do so, it is asking the army to release the report on the state of the TCE contamination. Some concerns remain regarding the possible extent of the contamination, which could extend as far as Val-Bélair.

Will the Minister of National Defence accommodate the City of Quebec's request and allow it to release the report on the extent of the contamination?

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the report in question was not completed until the end of December 2008. Naturally, we would like to take some time to review the report's conclusions. Those conclusions will be communicated to all stakeholders, including the City of Quebec and the Province of Quebec. Since the report relies on information from third parties, they must be consulted before the report can be made public.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has been questioning the government about the Shannon water scandal since 2001. Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have acknowledged their responsibility, and both have even tried covering up the whole issue. For too many years now, the situation has remained unresolved; instead, it is getting worse.

When will the government acknowledge its responsibility and take concrete action?

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, an advisory committee was created in 2001 to facilitate communication among the numerous parties concerned, including the citizens and representatives of the federal, provincial and municipal governments. The results, once analyzed, are communicated regularly to the City of Quebec and the municipality of Shannon. The Department of National Defence has been working closely with all stakeholders from the beginning, and it will continue to do so.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY**

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has undermined Canada's Arctic sovereignty. It scaled back large Arctic icebreakers. It did away with our polar ambassador. The government has weakened our presence in the north.

Given this, what can the minister possibly tell the Arctic Council countries at their upcoming meeting to credibly assert our sovereignty?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will be glad to tell them why that member is supporting the budget. There is a good reason for it. It is because of the many things in it for the north: \$80-some million for improving research facilities; a further study on the permanent research facilities that will be there; increased funding for the military in the north; more money for health care in the north; and money is being set aside for housing in the north.

We continue to put the north on the agenda like it has never been before. I look forward to that member's support on a very aggressive northern agenda.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for that totally irrelevant answer. It is too bad the Minister of Foreign Affairs cannot say what he will say at the upcoming meeting.

The government has not put the same resources into social, heritage and search and rescue programs in the north that it has into military buildup.

Canada's greatest strength in our claim to Arctic sovereignty is our northern aboriginal and other peoples who make up Canada's history and development in the north.

Why does the minister not agree with northerners, which is that all these very important programs are critical to a valid and strong Arctic sovereignty claim?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member's second question allows me to continue.

We are continuing with increased regulation of transportation for boats travelling through the Arctic to ensure they meet our environmental standards. We are continuing with an election promise to develop a northern development agency. We are renewing the SINED program. We are continuing with devolution talks with Nunavut and working with the Northwest Territories. We have \$36 million to improve the regulatory process on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

I would ask the member for a third question, please, as I need more time.

**The Speaker:** Maybe we will get a speech later.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after insulting thousands of hard-working Canadians, yesterday the Minister of Human Resources delivered another slap in the face suggesting that the unemployed simply are not looking hard enough for work.

What does the minister now say to the 1,500 workers who lost their jobs this morning when Tembec announced more closures; British Columbians in Canal Flats, Elko, Cranbrook, Skookumchuk and Chetwynd, Manitobans in Pine Falls, and Ontarians in Hearst who will all lose their jobs?

Will the minister stop insulting workers and start supporting them?

• (1455)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, actually it is the NDP who should be apologizing to those people.

Our economic action plan is providing a tremendous amount of support for those who are unfortunate enough to lose their jobs. We are providing an extra five weeks of EI benefits over top of regular benefits. We are expanding the work sharing program so that people do not lose their jobs. We are expanding the targeted initiative for older workers. We are providing an unprecedented amount of training for not only those who are on EI, but for those who are not even on it.

The NDP will be voting against every one of those initiatives. Those members deserve to apologize.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that reply is another insult to families right across Canada.

The Tembec shutdown is just the latest victim of the government's refusal to take action. Nearly 200 mills have closed on the Conservatives' watch alone.

Canadians in forestry towns need support not so they can stay at home, but so they can keep their homes.

The market needed a kickstart, mills needed better credit, workers needed EI and communities needed infrastructure support without handcuffs. The budget failed on all fronts. Now some government members are laughing.

Why is the government turning its back on forest companies in Canada?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member were to take the time to actually read the economic action plan, he would see that we have addressed every one of those issues.

We are providing more support for workers unfortunate enough to lose their jobs. We have a special focus on those long tenured workers who lose their jobs so that they can go back to school. We will continue EI benefits for them.

We have the community adjustment fund to help communities that have been particularly hard hit when they depend on a particular industry or company.

### Oral Questions

It is the hon. member once again who should apologize to those people.

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### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thanks to a \$31 million investment from our Conservative government, the Port Alma wind farm in my riding is now online producing clean, renewable power for Canadians. This wind farm creates enough energy to power 30,000 homes each year. It is just one project in a long list of clean, renewable energy projects that our government is supporting across the country.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources update the House on our government's strong support for clean, renewable energy?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for all the hard work he does in his riding on this issue.

Our government acted early in January 2007 with a \$1.5 billion investment in renewable energy. Thanks to this early action, projects like the one mentioned today are coming online across Canada.

As there are still significant funds remaining in the program, I look forward to approving similar projects in the coming months.

Furthermore, we built on this early action with a \$2.5 billion clean energy fund and a \$1 billion green infrastructure fund in our economic plan.

This government is delivering on a clean, green future for Canada.

\* \* \*

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians who have lost their jobs due to the recession now face a double whammy when they apply for EI benefits.

With a higher volume of applicants, my constituents are telling me that it is virtually impossible for people to reach the EI call centre by telephone for vital information.

When will the government expand the number of people operating the EI call centre and give Canadians the proper service they deserve?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in these times, when too many people are losing their jobs through circumstances beyond their control, we have already taken steps and will continue to take steps to ensure they get the benefits they deserve in a timely manner.

To that end, we have expanded the hours of the call centres. We have people working overtime to process claims. We are doing load balancing and are bringing back people who have EI processing experience so they can do the job of making sure that Canadians get the benefits that they need and deserve in a timely manner.

*Speaker's Ruling*

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the amounts in the Conservative budget allocated to the slaughter industry seem to be for new projects only.

Does this mean that the government will give nothing to the Levinoff-Colbex slaughter house, to which producers have recently contributed \$30 million in capital? Or can the minister tell us today that this slaughter house will also receive one dollar from the government for every dollar invested by agricultural producers?

● (1500)

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, during the election campaign we promised to invest \$50 million in the slaughter industry. That is what we have done. The \$50 million is now in the budget. The Liberal Party opposite will be supporting us whereas the Bloc Québécois refuses to do.

We intend to support industries in this sector that need assistance. Levinoff-Colbex has already contacted officials at the department with regard to their file.

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[English]

**HOUSING**

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 1.5 million Canadian families live in unacceptable housing conditions and over 300,000 seek refuge in shelters every year. Canada has a housing crisis and to fix it we need a long term national strategy but the minister said clearly that any money promised in this Conservative budget is a one-off investment.

Will the minister explain how her approach translates into a national housing strategy when we know this plan is doing nothing to protect Canada's most vulnerable?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ignores, conveniently, the fact that last September we made a commitment of almost \$2 billion to build new social housing to help those and the homeless. That is a considerable investment.

In this budget, we are including money to renovate and build social housing for seniors and the disabled right across the country.

I have to point out that with that significant investment to create jobs and help the vulnerable, she is voting against it.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Sioux Lookout, Red Lake and the isolated first nation communities in the Kenora riding appreciated this government's recent announcement for immediate additional funding to improve the winter road network across northwestern Ontario.

However, beyond the winter, first nation communities want to know that this government's 2009 economic action plan includes a

strategy for the long term infrastructure and critical community services priorities for their communities.

Would the minister tell us what measures this economic plan will take to ensure that the first nation community priorities will be addressed?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of the member for Kenora to improve, for example, the winter road conditions in his riding. I appreciate the announcement he made there last week.

I can assure him that the Prime Minister and I met with aboriginal leaders in productive prebudget talks. As a result, in budget 2009 we are making major investments in housing, improving drinking water, school construction, roads, recreational centres, health and policing services. There is also new spending for skills and development.

All of this begs a question. When aboriginal leaders call all this budget good and a necessary step, why are the NDP and the Bloc voting against it?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**POINT OF ORDER**

## DECORUM IN THE CHAMBER—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord concerning remarks read in the House by the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on Tuesday, December 2, 2008.

The member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord raised this point of order for the first time on December 3, 2008, during the previous session, and raised it again on January 27, 2009.

● (1505)

[English]

I would like to thank the hon. member for raising this question, and the hon. government House leader and the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for their interventions on December 3, 2008.

[Translation]

The member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord was concerned about the remarks that the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke read during the debate on December 2, 2008, on the government motion on the economic and financial statement. He asked the member to withdraw her remarks that he considered unparliamentary and, at the same time, asked the Chair to rule on the right of members to read extracts from emails or letters that contain remarks that would not normally be acceptable in the House.

*The Budget*

[English]

For his part, the hon. government House leader was concerned about the noise and unparliamentary language that we were hearing in the House at that point. The parliamentary secretary defended the right of the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to quote the text contained in the email.

[Translation]

I undertook to review this matter and then inform the House of my decision on this matter, but the session was prorogued the next day.

[English]

As the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord mentioned in his remarks, section 18 of the Standing Orders stipulates that:

No Member shall speak disrespectfully of the Sovereign, nor of any of the Royal Family, nor of the Governor General or the person administering the Government of Canada; nor use offensive words against either House, or against any Member thereof.

Moreover, as the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord mentioned, the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states on page 525 that:

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscene language or words are not in order.

This matter has been raised on several occasions in the past. It is true that members may quote from documents. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* mentions on page 517 that:

They—

Meaning members:

—may quote from private correspondence as long as they identify the sender by name or take full responsibility for its contents.

[Translation]

However, my predecessor, Mr. Speaker Parent, stated on November 18, 1998 (page 10133 of Debates) that:

I would remind all hon. members that we cannot use words in here which are used by someone else which we ourselves are not permitted to use. I would caution all members in their statements.

[English]

I also indicated on November 8, 2006, that the Chair would not tolerate members using unparliamentary language when they are quoting somebody. Having reviewed the words that caused the difficulty, words I would not repeat, it is clear to me that they were clearly unparliamentary.

[Translation]

The member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord was entirely right to point out that House practice does not allow someone to do indirectly that which they would not be permitted to do directly.

I want to take this opportunity once again to remind the hon. members to use more judicious language in their interventions. The political climate in the House was very heated last December, but I trust that a moderate climate will now become the norm and, to that

end, I urge all the members not to disregard the rules of civility and courtesy.

[English]

I want to thank the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for the regrets they expressed about the remarks made on December 2 and 3, 2008. Consequently, I consider this matter resolved. I thank the House for its attention on this matter.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1510)

[English]

**THE BUDGET**

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I first voted in a federal election in 1993, when Canada was at a very difficult time and important juncture in our history. I remember well at that point in time the difficulty of our economic situation. Canada was buried in debt. The level of unemployment was over 12%, inflation was something over 14%, and Canadians were generally not very optimistic about the ability of government to have an impact in their lives or, frankly, to get their fiscal house in order.

In fact, the situation was so bad *The Wall Street Journal* at that point in time said that Canada was an honorary member of the third world with respect to the inability of Canada to manage its debt situation. When a Liberal government took power in 1993, it was against a backdrop that demanded enormous fiscal restraint. Canada was taken from the bottom of the G7 across almost every indicator to the top across every single indicator by the time we were finished. It is no mistake or coincidence that as the deficit evaporated, Canada's competitiveness improved. We saw that our leadership in areas like job creation and economic growth within the G7 were greatly accelerated, to the point of putting us at the front of the pack as we finally got a handle on a situation that was utterly out of control.

When the Conservatives took power nearly three years ago, they inherited an economy that was robust and a fiscal position that was incredibly sound, turning in large surpluses year over year. In fact, so much debt had been paid down in the time of a Liberal administration that \$3 billion less in interest was being spent each and every year. They inherited that situation and in just three short years went from a \$13 billion surplus to a \$13 billion deficit before this economic situation even emerged. This is from Kevin Page, an independent officer of Parliament who is set with the responsibility to give us the real deal on what the numbers are.

Before we even began this current economic tumult, we were in a situation of deficit. Fiscal mismanagement over that three year period had left Canada vulnerable. Instead of being in a situation where we had money in the bank and we were turning in surpluses, we were in a situation of deficit.

*The Budget*

After the last election, there was great talk about the need for a spirit of co-operation, to come together and find solutions. Certainly, everyone recognized at that point that the economy was going to be in a very difficult space. The statements of the Prime Minister that it was a good time to buy stocks, or that we were not really in a recession or that there would not really be a deficit were not even being held on to by the Prime Minister or the Conservatives anymore. Even they had to come clean about the direness of the situation.

We expected great things when the economic statement came forward. We had an expectation that it would be a collaborative process, that would involve other parties, and that it would present a coherent plan on how to deal with our economy and make sure that we weathered the difficult time together. Instead, we got one of the most partisan, meanspirited documents that this House has seen in some period of time. Instead of taking the challenge of working in a non-partisan way toward a common purpose, the economic statement tried to drive a stake into the hearts of other opposition parties and was a direct attack against the principles of equal pay for equal work for women and against labour unions. What was most concerning about it was its refusal to take any action on our economy.

That began a period of historic co-operation, of opposition parties working together and talking about forming a coalition. It was, in fact, that coalition that forced the budget we are now dealing with today. Most of the provisions never would have even been imagined by Conservatives let alone introduced in this House. It has caused something of an existential crisis for Conservatives, but Canadians recognize that action must be taken.

In that context, I am going to go over a couple of things I am both concerned about and also some things I am buoyed by regarding the budget that is now in front of us. I think the greatest disappointment of this budget is the fact that it misses a tremendous opportunity. When we are talking about stimulating our economy and making investments to get Canadians back to work, and to right a situation that is very unstable, there is the opportunity for Canada to introduce something like our own New Deal, similar to what FDR introduced in the United States, to have great vision and to use this opportunity to redefine Canada and help us transition into the future.

• (1515)

Infrastructure would have been the perfect vehicle for that. Infrastructure would have been the perfect opportunity in a large and historic way to build the infrastructure of a new economy, both the physical infrastructure and also the backbone of the new technologies that are going to be required to be successful in the future. But that opportunity was lost. It was given up. Instead, we sort of get a scattered approach of shooting a million things in a bunch of different places.

One of the worst things on infrastructure was the requirement for municipalities, which are often cash-strapped and heavily indebted themselves, to put forward one-third funding. This means many of those projects are not going to move forward. In fact, the process is so cumbersome, all projects will not be approved within six months. Most will be approved nine months or a year down the road, hardly

an action plan that takes immediate action on the economy. So that was greatly disappointing.

What I will say before I go back to some of the things that concern me about the budget on the positive side is the action that it takes on affordable housing. Certainly in my region of Durham, we see a huge number of people on waiting lists who are trying to access affordable housing, often for two or three years. People in very difficult economic circumstances who just want to be able to have shelter. How can they contemplate getting a good job or feeding their children if they do not have shelter? The measures that have been forced in this budget and brought forward on affordable housing are essential and timely.

Regarding skills development, clearly if we are going to have an expectation of our workforce to meet the challenges of the new economy to stay competitive and help get us through this very difficult time, skills training and development are essential. The measures in the budget could have gone further, but are very good and certainly some very positive elements there.

Expansions to the working income tax benefit and the child tax benefit are important because they help those who are most vulnerable directly, those people who are living at the margins who need our assistance. It is those quiet voices often, people who have difficulty speaking for themselves, who are going through very difficult times who need our help the most. Those types of measures, although I would have like to have seen more, are certainly helpful.

Investments in colleges and universities are a positive step and something that I welcome. It is important to highlight the fact though, that if we had just been left with the economic statement, before the historic collaboration of the opposition parties, none of the items I just mentioned would have been dealt with. It was only through those measures that we arrived at the point today where there are some things worth supporting in the budget.

One of the concerns I have with the budget in talking to nearly double the number of people who are seeking unemployment benefits in my riding and my region is the difficulty of accessing EI. There are many people who have the same number of hours as somebody in a different part of the country where they are eligible, but in my region they are not, despite the fact that particularly in areas just to the east of Oshawa, unemployment numbers are rising in a very scary way.

I also talked to people who were excited about the five week extension, only to learn that the five week extension is only applicable to them once this is passed. So for somebody who is just coming off EI, they will not have access to that five weeks. So the two week waiting period, lack of enhancement in benefits, the fact that there was no eligibility considered for those just coming off EI to get that additional five weeks, I think is great folly because these are individuals who are in a very precarious situation. Often a slight change in EI can make the difference between them being able to pay their mortgage and support their families or not.

*The Budget*

One of the other deep concerns we have is this notion of equal pay for equal work. We saw President Obama in the United States come forward very strongly on this principle that there has to be equal pay for equal work. This budget fails to address that. There was an attack on it in the economic statement and that is continued here.

I mentioned infrastructure but I should also mention the breaking of promises to the other provinces on equalization and the disappointment that creates, but also the continued bickering that we were promised was going to end. Obviously, we cannot blame the provinces for this because they are not being treated in a sense that is fair.

Our reality today is that this Parliament, up to only a week ago, had only sat 13 days in 7 months. It is a pathetic figure. We have an obligation now to get to work.

● (1520)

People do not want politics; they want action. Our job here is to ensure, while this is not exactly what the country needs, that we get an economic stimulus package going now. We need to get help to people who need that assistance right away. We need to ensure that we are ready at the first opportunity to provide a new solution to Canadians once we have had the opportunity to try, as best we can, to make Parliament work.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague rightly points out that the budget put forward by the Conservative government, which we are debating today, really does not resemble anything that Barack Obama might put together. Those guys are not Barack Obama, but I might point out that neither is he.

Barack Obama probably would not enter into a coalition with the Conservative Party. Barack Obama would probably vote against this budget. Therefore, any parallels he seeks to draw between himself and Barack Obama fail the most basic test. One cannot simultaneously support and oppose the Conservative budget, which we vote on later today.

I have heard my colleague very eloquently recite and dictate the many shortcomings of the budget and how fundamentally wrong it is, how it fails in its test in terms of stimulating the economy, how municipalities will be unable to avail themselves of the infrastructure money if they have to come up with one third of it.

How can my colleague stand there today and criticize the Minister of Finance's budget and then later today follow the orders of his party and vote for it? Will he not practice what he preaches and join us in opposing the Conservative budget that he claims to oppose so vigorously in his speech?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things I hear very clearly from my constituents is they expect this Parliament to work. The expectation that we would go back to another election is not one that makes any sense.

A couple of moments ago I said that the House only sat for a scant number of days in the last seven months. The risk of dropping us into another election at a time when Canadians are demanding action, rightfully, on the economy would make absolutely no sense.

A lot of the measures in the budget are very supportable and will do good things for the economy. They are there precisely because

opposition parties demanded that they be. Opposition parties forced Conservatives to do things they would never otherwise do.

One of the things we have done in our amendment is to ensure that on infrastructure and other matters and on the efficacy of the actions taken by the Conservative government, that it is held to account, that we ensure the money is in fact being spent and being used to stimulate the economy and that we hold the government to account for this relative success of it.

We have an obligation, after only having been here for a couple of days, after having had three elections in four years, to make an honest effort to make this Parliament work and to use this body for as much good as we possibly can.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has covered some good ground.

It is a good point of debate. The operative assertion should be that this Parliament, in view of the fact that the government has not allowed it to work except for only a few days in the 40th Parliament, has to put the interests of the people ahead of partisan interests.

I think that is what it comes down to for most members who will support the budget. It will be from the standpoint that there are some things in the budget that will translate.

Would the member like to comment on one other aspect? We are at the beginning of February with still two months to go in the current fiscal year. Substantial funds have been allocated for infrastructure projects, which clearly would be job creating in their nature, yet the government has seen fit to not proceed with those projects, even though we have time.

Why? Is it that the government is possibly trying to window dress the results of the current fiscal period to try to argue to Canadians that it getting the job done when in fact the figures show it is not?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I think we have all been stuck in the situation where we have talked to mayors and to councillors who are frustrated with seeing press releases and announcements followed by huge vacuums of time where nothing happens, nothing transpires. The number bears this out, as the member says. Infrastructure money is not flowing.

This is one of the reasons why it was so important to have passed the amendment yesterday, to hold the Conservatives' feet to the fire to ensure they actually spend this money.

The second point with respect to the moving of numbers to try to make this fiscal year look better than it actually is, in the economic statement we were dealing with the Conservative government trying to book \$10 billion in sold assets without even telling us what they were. It is an outrageous proposition that in the bottom of a market the government has suggested selling off \$10 billion in assets without even confirming what those are.

We need to be vigilant. The government has clearly shown that it is not adverse to playing with numbers.

*The Budget*

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time in this debate with the member for Saint-Boniface.

I am very moved to be taking part today in the debate on the 2009 budget, especially when I think of the difficulties many of our fellow citizens are facing in this time of economic upheaval.

Emotion is triggered as well by the indelible memories marking the history of my riding. Thetford Mines, where I was born, was hit hard in the 1980s by the collapse of the asbestos industry. I can tell you that it was not easy. It was not easy for families or businesses. It was not easy for anyone. The entire community was affected.

This difficult experience taught me quickly that, whatever our age or job, wherever we live in this great country, it is never easy to be the victim of economic upheaval. It taught me as well to never give up. Even in the hardest times when bad news followed bad news, the people of Thetford Mines showed that by joining forces and redoubling one's efforts things can be changed. And today, the region is a fine example of economic diversification.

This is why, today, I believe in our economic action plan. It is the product of the broadest prebudget consultation in the history of Canada. We consulted, we listened and now we are acting. We are acting to protect Canadians' assets. We are acting to stimulate employment and the economy. And we are acting to prepare the future now. Through our good management over the past three years and our economic action plan tabled by the Minister of Finance last Tuesday, we will be able to control the damage and quickly overcome the effects of the crisis.

Over the next two years, we will be injecting an additional \$40 billion annually into the economy. As I said, we consulted Canadians right across the country. We looked at all possible scenarios and concluded that the best solution was to temporarily and cautiously allow public finances to go into a deficit position. The real question, however, is whether there was any choice.

In the light of events in recent weeks, a decision to do nothing would have had much more serious, even catastrophic, results in the short, medium and long terms. In this context, we decided to first help our workers, families, businesses and regions already hit directly by the crisis.

For unemployed workers, not only have we extended the benefit period by five weeks, but we have also invested \$500 million to help them undertake long-term training. We will ensure that employees whose employer declares bankruptcy receive their full wages, as well as all severance packages due to them. We will also be reducing personal income tax in order to leave families with more money in their pockets and to stimulate consumption.

In all, there will be close to \$20 billion in new tax reductions over six years to help individuals and families. There is also help for those wishing to create employment.

Since we came into power in 2006, we have taken steps to ensure that Canadian businesses have the lowest taxation rate of all the G7 countries. Today we are moving still further by lightening the tax

burden a little more for our small and medium businesses, which are the driving force behind job creation in this country. We have also created a community adjustment fund of \$1 billion over two years. This fund will provide direct assistance to our communities in their innovative efforts to diversify their economy. Finally, there are unprecedented efforts in connection with infrastructures, and these will have an impact that will be as considerable as it is immediate in our communities.

Our primary objective is to work in close conjunction with the provinces and municipalities to put in motion priority projects to stimulate employment in record time. In addition to the \$33 billion of past investment in our building Canada fund, we have allocated an additional \$4 billion over two years for local and regional projects. There will also be another \$1 billion for green and sustainable infrastructure, particularly improvements to public transit systems.

• (1530)

In addition, we will invest \$2 billion in the renovation of universities and colleges, along with another \$750 million for the Foundation for Innovation, which contributes to the improvement of research facilities in those same institutions. It can be seen, then, that our efforts go far beyond merely investing in bricks and mortar. We are upgrading infrastructures, stimulating employment and the economy, and modernizing the facilities that will ensure our success in the knowledge-based economy.

Once again, my department, Public Works and Government Services Canada, will put its shoulder to the wheel, investing \$250 million by 2011 in order to speed up the modernization of hundreds of federal laboratories. These laboratories play a crucial role in ensuring the health of Canadians and the safety of the food they eat. Close to \$270 million more will be allocated to the maintenance and upgrading of federal bridges and \$212 million to maintain the Champlain bridge in Montreal. Regardless of the future of that bridge, it must be kept safe, not just now but for the years to come.

As the minister responsible for the Montreal region, I am delighted with our additional investments, not just in infrastructure, but also in culture and social housing, three sectors that are a priority for Montreal as well as for a number of other Quebec municipalities.

Our new investments in culture, in the order of \$500 million, will contribute to the growth of organizations and events to boost the economic and cultural vitality of Quebec.

*The Budget*

Our government has always recognized the importance of culture and we are proud that, over the next two years, we will be putting \$100 million into festivals, \$60 million into cultural infrastructure and \$20 million into arts training. These are considerable amounts that will be invested in effective programs that will benefit our creators, our broadcasters and our communities.

Besides these efforts, we will invest \$1 million over two years to renovate 200,000 social housing units in the country.

I could go on listing many other significant investments, but I believe that you have grasped the scope of the plan that we are working to put in place. It is a plan that will benefit the construction industry, job creation and people's quality of life. This plan will stimulate economic activity in our country in order to avoid a prolonged slowdown in our economy. We are investing now to stimulate the economy, but we are also investing in our future, in the future of our infrastructure, which will create a much better legacy for our future generations.

Our plan shows that in the face of this raging economic crisis, our government is acting. Given the scope of the challenge, this is not the time for partisan debates. On the contrary, the time has come for parliamentarians, for everyone in this country, to work together. We are facing an exceptional crisis and we must take exceptional action, which is what we are doing in our plan. This is also why I am asking the members of this House to support this economic action plan, which is a direct response to the needs and expectations of the Quebeckers and the Canadians who asked us to take action.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on an area of discussion from the earlier speeches, not so much about what is in the current budget but where we are right now.

It is clear there has been an exacerbation of the economic circumstances in Canada. It is clear we need stimulus not only to create new jobs in the future in newer areas or those with the greatest potential, but also to save jobs by reducing job losses in the current situation.

I do not know whether the minister has any words of wisdom, but it appears we are hung up without any money flowing into the approved and allocated areas. For instance, infrastructure funding already has been designated, but there seems to be a problem of getting the money out in the current fiscal year. What concerns me, and I know the Minister of Finance is probably troubled by this as well, is that we have two months left in the current fiscal year without any major spending on infrastructure, which will create the jobs that inevitably will be needed.

Does the minister share that view and would he encourage the Minister of Finance to get the money flowing?

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an important point. The money must go out, and quickly. That is why our government is taking action. When we talk about cutting red tape, that means that actions announced in the budget are under way.

We have also been asked to table reports in this House to ensure that the money is spent, and spent wisely.

We heard what Canadians were saying. We held the most extensive series of consultations ever seen in this country. We must act, and act now. At the same time, we must act responsibly.

Projects are there. My own department has projects ready to go. I will be happy to do everything I can to make things happen. Our government wants this to work. We will take steps to make it work, and it will work.

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to what the Minister of Public Works and Government Services had to say. Some of what he said is very hurtful to Quebeckers, especially the people in the regions. I am referring to what he said about how this government is taking action and what is in the budget.

The minister says they have taken action. I would like to ask him where the government has focused its action. I have the feeling that the unemployed have been ignored, just like the people in the regions, the people working in forestry and fishing. The government's priority lies elsewhere. It is certainly not in Quebec, and it is certainly not the people I just mentioned.

I would like to hear what notable steps the minister believes the government has taken to help these groups, which should not have been ignored.

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we took action. As early as last year we created the billion dollar trust fund, a trust fund that my hon. colleague voted against, I would remind the House. We have already taken steps in the area of forestry. And this year, we just announced new funding of \$1 billion. My colleague again said he would vote against it. We have funding for forestry, innovation and marketing, as well as to promote products and support measures. That is what the industry is asking for and what has been applauded by the Forest Products Association of Canada.

My colleague comes from a rural area. Like me, he is very familiar with infrastructure problems. And there are many, they are widespread. People need water systems, culverts and sewers, and say there is too much red tape. Here is what we are doing: we are acting. We want to eliminate duplication when it comes to environmental assessments. There is also the Navigable Waters Protection Act. We will lift such restrictions. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Fédération québécoise des municipalités, the Coalition pour le renouvellement des infrastructures du Québec, everyone is applauding this budget.

Also, I do not see what is hurtful. The problem is people like the Bloc Québécois members, who will vote against the budget, against the will of everyone, against those who want more infrastructure spending.

*The Budget*

● (1540)

*[English]*

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin to address the budget this afternoon, I would like to take a moment to thank the constituents in my beautiful riding of Saint Boniface for putting their faith in me to represent them as their member of Parliament. It is an honour to be their representative here in Ottawa, and it is a responsibility I take very seriously.

I would also like to thank all the wonderful volunteers who dedicated hundreds of hours to my campaign last fall to ensure that Saint Boniface had the representation from a member who is committed to listening to their needs.

Finally I want to take a moment to thank my husband, Bruce, and our five children, Jason, Tracy, Jamie-Lee, Michael and Randi Sue, for believing in me and supporting me in my quest to make positive change in our community. Seeking public office is a decision that is made with a great deal of consideration. It is a huge commitment on the part of one's family. I could not stand here today in the House of Commons without the support of my family.

*[Translation]*

Saint Boniface is a magnificent region where the people are welcoming and warm. It has a rich history and a vibrant culture. However, Saint Boniface has also been affected by the international economic crisis and it is my responsibility to protect its interests and secure our future.

*[English]*

These are extraordinary times, and Canada is being negatively affected by the global recession that originated in the United States. Our government's first priority is and has always been to protect Canada during this uncertain, tumultuous time.

Canada's economic action plan, budget 2009, presented proudly by the Minister of Finance, is the culmination of weeks of consultations with Canadians across the country. Our members of Parliament have worked diligently to solicit advice and input from Canadians in every walk of life, every community, every industry and every level of government. The Minister of Finance's team crossed the country and consulted widely with some of the leading economic and financial minds in Canada, not just the people on Bay Street or the car manufacturers in southern Ontario, but everyone from coast to coast to coast.

I myself met with community leaders and constituents and everyday Canadians in my riding of Saint Boniface. They are concerned about the future of our country if action is not taken immediately, yet at the same time they feel a sense of confidence in knowing that the Prime Minister and our Conservative government are the ones to see us through this uncertain time.

We know that since last fall, the global economic situation has deteriorated further and faster than anyone could have predicted. That is why our government is taking immediate action.

*[Translation]*

You are all aware that we are in the midst of a global economic crisis and that our country will not go unscathed. Canadians want the government to make investments, reduce taxes and protect the most vulnerable.

As a former police sergeant, I know that people need to feel protected and to be reassured. That is why, after undertaking unprecedented consultations of citizens across the country, our government tabled an economic action plan to stimulate the economy and protect Canadians.

*[English]*

In Canada's economic action plan, we are focusing on immediate stimulus to help those hit hardest by the global recession. We are supplying extra support to those who have lost their jobs. We are helping families and stimulating consumer spending. We are protecting jobs and supporting businesses, and we are also helping to ensure that there is access to financing for those businesses. We are taking immediate action to build infrastructure.

A wide and diverse array of officials, commentators and organizations across Canada are applauding the federal budget as a positive plan to address current global economic challenges while helping secure Canada's long-term growth and prosperity.

I would like to take some time to underline some of the aspects of the economic action plan that will deliver significant impacts for my riding of Saint Boniface and for Manitoba.

We will receive our share of \$4.5 billion over two years for infrastructure projects such as road, water and sewer system upgrades across the province. Our action to build infrastructure will accelerate payments up to \$75 million over two years for additional infrastructure projects.

We are taking action to reduce taxes and freeze EI rates by providing the people and businesses of Manitoba with tax relief of \$699.1 million over the next five years and providing billions to keep EI rates low for 2009-10.

Our action with income tax relief will provide Manitobans with \$340.2 million through the form of increases in the basic personal amount and the upper limits of the two lowest personal income tax brackets, and \$55.4 million through raising the income thresholds at which the national child benefit supplement and the base benefit of the Canada child tax benefit are phased out. This is providing up to \$436 for a family with two children.

We will also provide \$71.9 million through a \$1,000 increase in the age credit amount, effective in 2009, which will help eligible low- and middle-income seniors by providing up to \$150 of additional federal income tax relief each year.

There is \$31.4 million in support for first-time homebuyers through the \$5,000 first-time homebuyers' tax credit to assist first-time homebuyers with the costs associated with the purchase of a home.

*The Budget*

We are taking action to stimulate housing construction by providing billions to stimulate construction for companies such as the Ladko Company in my riding and to enhance energy efficiency.

My constituents are already excited about the new home renovation tax credit that will provide up to \$1,350 per homeowner and will benefit Manitoba homeowners by up to \$150 million over two years.

My constituents in Saint Boniface and Manitoba will also benefit from initiatives including a share of \$2 billion to support deferred maintenance and repair projects at post-secondary institutions such as the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Art and culture have always been important to the various communities in Manitoba. I am proud to say that the economic plan put forward by the Conservative government meets these needs by proposing investments of more than \$246 million in arts and culture programs and the tourist industry in Canada.

[*English*]

We will continue to receive growing federal transfer payments in 2009-10 that will total \$3.6 billion, an increase of \$88 million from last year and a \$782 million increase over what the former Liberal government provided. Manitoba will see growing health and social transfers to help the province pay for vital health care at hospitals such as the St. Boniface General Hospital and for the educational and social services families depend on.

Canada's economic action plan responds to these uncertain times by providing significant stimulus to the economy to help protect and create jobs, to support families by cutting taxes and to prepare our country for success in the years ahead with meaningful investments.

[*Translation*]

To conclude, the economic action plan put forward by our government addresses the challenges that await us.

It provides short-term measures to stimulate the economy and ensure long-term benefits. This is vital to the community of Saint Boniface and also to the rest of Canada. We have managed to find a balance by putting money directly back into the pockets of citizens and making investments.

I am confident that, with this plan, Canadians, especially in my riding of Saint Boniface, will be able to get through these difficult economic times.

[*English*]

We have listened to Canadians. We have provided a plan. We are working to restore confidence. Our action is immediate, and we are bringing hope for a bright future to Canadians from coast to coast.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask our hon. member a few questions. Canada has clearly been at the forefront on the issue of investing in research and development. I recognize that under the Liberal government we invested quite a bit of money, but there is no new money, and I say new money, in this budget for Genome Canada or for many of those other research arms of the government.

I happen to think that in discussions about job creation, those things are extremely important. I would like to hear comments from the member.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her question. I would also like to encourage the member to take a look at our budget. It is very clear about the money that has been invested. I would refer the member to page 138, and I quote:

The government will advance Canada's knowledge advantage by:

Dedicating up to \$2 billion to repair, retrofit and expand facilities at post-secondary institutions.

Providing \$750 million for leading-edge research infrastructure through the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

Providing \$50 million to the Institute for Quantum Computing in Waterloo, Ontario to build a new world-class research facility.

Allocating \$87 million over the next two years to maintain or upgrade key Arctic research facilities.

Providing \$250 million over two years to address deferred maintenance at federal laboratories.

Providing \$500 million to Canada Health Infoway to encourage the greater use of electronic health records.

Providing \$225 million over three years to develop and implement a strategy on extending broadband coverage to unserved communities.

It goes on and on and on. I beg to differ with the member across the floor. We are investing in research and we will continue to bring hope to Canadians.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the member opposite say that this was her first speech in the House. I am not sure that I understood correctly. I gather she talked about unprecedented consultations with Canadians.

Pardon me, but that is really not the case, because there is already a long-standing precedent in this House: the prebudget consultations conducted by the Standing Committee on Finance. The precedent lies in the fact that this is the first time there has been no prebudget consultation. That is the real precedent.

The government held pseudo-consultations. Various organizations from various sectors called me to say that someone had called them and given them two days' notice of a meeting to be held in Ottawa. They did not think it was a real committee because the opposition members were not even there. All of this pseudo-consultation is nothing but a joke.

At the very least, will the member admit that no real consultations were held and that it was a load of rubbish?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ. I took part in many preconsultations.

*The Budget*

I must compliment the ministers who attended in my riding. We had the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry. A number of economic leaders and leaders in industry took part in the preconsultations and they were very pleased to have the opportunity to speak with our ministers and our members of Parliament, many of whom were in the room.

I am not sure why the message did not get to the hon. member or his constituents but we certainly did everything in our power to reach every constituent and every person in every riding so they could give us some advice and some input.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the \$1,350 home renovation credit that is available but that credit does not apply to renters. People who rent homes with long term leases, et cetera, need to paint and do the landscaping. I wonder if the member would indicate why renters have been excluded from this tax benefit.

**Mrs. Shelly Glover:** Mr. Speaker, having been a homeowner who rented to renters previously, I can assure the hon. member that most homeowners are responsible for doing the repairs at rental properties. I offer that as some vision into the answer to his question.

I would also like to remind the member opposite that Canada's economic action plan supports the home construction and home renovation industry, which will bring jobs to Canadians who have suffered under this global recession. I want to encourage him to vote for our budget later on today so we can bring that forward to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Sherbrooke.

It is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak to the budget tabled by the Conservative government, a budget that completely misses the mark when it comes to environmental issues and the fight against climate change.

A review of the part on investment in the environment reveals that one-third of the budget will be allocated to nuclear power and big oil, as though that kind of federal government investment could offer us any hope of one day building a sustainable economy. This government needs to understand that investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy is investing in job creation.

With a third of this green budget going to oil companies and nuclear power, we seriously doubt that the government is making the green shift it needs to make to revive the economy. That is the message my constituents sent me last fall when more than 700 people answered my call and asked the federal government to make major investments to reposition Canada's economy and make it more competitive and more sustainable.

But the federal government did not listen to anyone, including the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, who clearly told the international community that the current economic crisis should not be used as an excuse to ignore other crises, such as climate change. Spending on the environment totals \$1 billion over five years, or \$200 million a year.

This is deplorable, especially since the government is creating what it calls a new energy fund. But let us look more closely at where these energy dollars will go. We might have hoped the government would increase funding for renewable energies, particularly wind, solar and geothermal power. But no, this energy fund will be used to fund carbon storage research and technologies. That will enable oil companies that are thinking of producing five times more oil from the tar sands to capture CO<sub>2</sub> and bury it. Meanwhile, internationally, the technical compliance and effectiveness and the social acceptability of these carbon capture and storage technologies have not been determined.

We are talking about \$850 million for carbon capture projects and \$150 million for research, and that is over and above the \$375 million previous budgets have provided for carbon capture and storage projects in Saskatchewan. Basically, this energy fund will not be used to fund renewable energies for the future. Instead, it will be used to fund an unproven technology that will help Canada's oil and gas industries continue producing polluting energies from fossil fuels.

This budget contains a second mistake. Not only is money going to oil companies, but it is also going to the nuclear sector. According to the minister, \$350 million will be put towards reinforcing Canada's nuclear program. While we have yet to find sustainable ways to store nuclear waste, the government is taking us on an endless adventure without fully understanding the consequences. And just last week the current technology—think about the advanced CANDU—once again proved its inefficiency with leaks into the Ottawa River.

● (1555)

We are investing in technology while the waste problem has yet to be solved.

Investing \$350 million over two years to improve home energy efficiency is not much, especially knowing that energy efficiency could create jobs.

Here is a single statistic from the United Nations Environment Program: in Europe, a 20% increase in energy efficiency would create one million jobs. That demonstrates that energy efficiency can create jobs and thus stimulate the economy. However, the government prefers to put money into home renovation programs for properties and condos to build bigger balconies and decks. The Minister of Finance made that as clear as day. He definitely does not understand that energy efficiency can create jobs.

*The Budget*

But, the new president of the United States, Barack Obama, understands. How did he show that he understands? His \$815 billion stimulus plan first aims to double the production of renewable energy and then will invest \$60 billion to create 500,000 jobs in green energy. The United States has rightly understood that investments in green energy create jobs. In 2005 alone, the American environmental industry created more than 5.3 million jobs. This demonstrates that investing in the environment creates jobs.

The Canadian government decided instead to give \$2.7 billion, for 2009 alone, to the auto industry and did not even bother to attach conditions to this financing. The government could very well have asked, as Barack Obama did a few weeks ago, for stricter emission standards for new model vehicles. Why not make Canada's automotive industry more competitive with its Japanese counterpart? If we are going to invest \$2.7 billion we should at least impose manufacturing conditions that will make the industry more competitive. But no, we give them a blank cheque for \$2.7 billion and we do not invest in renewable energy, an area that will create jobs, I insist.

The U.S. plans to improve the energy efficiency of two million homes. That is the objective set by the new American president in order to improve energy efficiency in the United States. The energy efficiency of 75% of American federal government buildings will have to be increased. Why? It is not because the American government wants to invest for the sake of investing. It understands that by improving the energy efficiency of these institutional buildings, it will help improve and create new jobs.

The Conservative government just does not understand. When we compare the budget before us with the American recovery plan, we realize that only one sixth as much money, on a per capita basis, will be invested in the fight against climate change.

The Americans seem to have grasped that a green shift is absolutely necessary to spur economic recovery. In Canada, however, the economic recovery plan is set in stone and leaves no room for value added, as seen in green industries.

•(1600)

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc for pointing out some of the shortcomings of this budget as it pertains to the environment and energy retrofit.

I agree with him that what we heard from the United States in terms of its economic recovery program was an inspirational transformative initiative. The United States is using this economic crisis as an opportunity to change the way it does business. That seems to have been lost on our colleagues in the Conservative Party. They are tinkering with programs, but they are not doing anything transformative that would really prepare us for the new economy of the coming century.

I would ask him about the one specific thing he mentioned at the end of his speech, the energy retrofit proposals for residential homes. He mentioned that the goal in the United States is two million homes.

I would ask him to comment on the program suggested in Canada which requires one to spend \$10,000 to get \$1,300 in return. Does he agree that that amount is paltry and will not stimulate activity to the degree that is necessary?

•(1605)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, in fact it will not stimulate the economy. Not one single official, either at Environment Canada or Natural Resources Canada, will be able to identify the impact of the announced plan and program because there are just too many unknowns. We need direct and realistic tax credits that do not serve to just make superficial improvements to our homes. We have to make them more efficient. That is how we will reduce our dependence on oil in coming years.

I have always maintained that a plan for fighting climate change must be based on two things: the reduction of emissions at their source and an excellent energy efficiency program. This government's budget contains neither one.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his excellent speech. He raised some excellent points, illustrating the fact that the budget is so weak, especially in the area of housing, that it brings tears to my eyes. That is what I would like to ask my colleague about.

First of all, in terms of energy efficiency, greater efforts are absolutely essential. There is also the question of social housing. I know that my hon. colleague also believes that social housing is needed for the Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie riding. Yet what did the government propose in its budget? It is proposing the creation of social housing only for vulnerable seniors and people with a disability. What does it propose for all the other vulnerable people, the working poor, people who have families and do not know how they are going to pay the rent? This exists not only in my colleague's riding, but across Canada.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this weak point in the budget.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, the budget proposes only \$1 billion over two years for social housing. That means only renovations, when, really, there is a desperate need. In my riding alone, 2,500 people are on the waiting list for housing with the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal. The budget is very disappointing in this area. True, existing housing needs to be improved at this time, but that is not enough. We need to reinvest in social housing and create new housing units in partnership with the provinces. There is a desperate need and the budget definitely does not meet the expectations of our most vulnerable citizens.

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague who spoke before me concerning the points that caught his attention in particular.

Before I speak about the budget, I would like to say that a major consultation took place not long ago. The government says that it consulted on the budget, but normally the consultation takes place in 308 ridings in Canada.

*The Budget*

In fact, with all of the proposals and measures the Bloc Québécois had brought to the Conservative government when we left in June 2008, the government should have been aware that there was an economic crisis. It was not simply that after the financial crisis the economic crisis became apparent because, for the past two years the impending economic crisis has made itself felt, threatening to strike us sooner or later.

We called for significant measures, first from the Liberal government and then from the Conservative government, to help the manufacturing and forestry industries as well as the poor. Money, help and services for the poor are immediately put back into the economy.

In June 2008, the government decided to take it easy, taking two months of vacation to prepare for a potential election campaign, and that is what it did. There was an automatic delay of four months because of the election campaign. And since October 14 we have waited another three and a half months. The Conservatives do not seem to have understood the message from their October 2008 consultations. I imagine that a large number of Canada's ridings are having serious economic and employment issues.

Since the Conservatives came to power, more than 80,000 jobs have been lost. They were not conscious of that. They were not conscious of the fact that they needed to help these people directly, support the economy and invest monumental amounts of necessary money.

The philosophy of the Conservative Party and the Conservative government is much different. It is a conservative party. That is clear. It is a right-wing party. Economically speaking, the only actions they know are cutting spending and taxes. For the economy and investments, it is the most extreme of laissez-faire policies.

Imagine a government with that kind of philosophy finding itself on the brink of an economic crisis. What can it do? The Conservatives do not know what to do. That much is clear. In October 2008, they decided to challenge the opposition by proposing nothing at all or next to nothing, and moreover, by launching a direct attack on certain rights: democratic rights, women's rights and union rights. Then there was the budget. It, too, contained many things the opposition did not want, things the provinces and Quebec did not want, especially Quebec, which did not want government interference.

This government set the stage for the political crisis that followed. The coalition was formed, and its members agreed on policies to stimulate the economy in Quebec and Canada. The policies received nearly unanimous support within the coalition, and we knew it was the best way to move forward. There was a serious loss of confidence in the government which, as everyone expected, has shown its true colours. This government did not follow the Bloc Québécois' recommendations.

•(1610)

In his speech, the Minister of Finance thanked us for having contributed by making serious proposals. Then he said he would read them eventually. As it turns out, the Conservative government did not really mean it when it reached out to all members of Parliament and asked them to help move things forward.

Following that challenge, the coalition did develop significant proposals. However, the Prime Minister did not follow up, and then he prorogued the House, which caused further delay. We really thought he would have understood, but at that point, he did not. The excellent proposals we put forward resulted in something else: this budget speech. As I said earlier, the Minister of Finance claims that he conducted the broadest consultations ever. I did not hear anyone in my riding talk about it. I heard people talk about my own 36-day consultation during the election campaign. I knew exactly what the people of the riding of Sherbrooke needed and wanted. People recognized the need for immediate action, but that is not what the government has delivered.

I am going to talk in specific terms about the fundamental problems with this budget, which we will not support, but which the Liberal Party has obviously agreed to support. It reminds me of the story of the wolf who ate the grandmother and then started making eyes at Little Red Riding Hood. Eventually, the wolf ate Little Red Riding Hood as well.

Budget 2009 is a real hodgepodge, because it includes dozens of little measures to please everyone. But it misses the mark on a number of important issues. Take equalization. Maintaining the change will deprive Quebec of \$1 billion in 2009-10. From what I understand, certain hand-picked Liberals will have the right to vote against this budget. Seeing as how everyone in Quebec is against the direction this budget takes, I hope the opposition leader will also allow the Liberal members from Quebec to vote against the budget. We shall see. It will be interesting to see.

As my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said earlier, there are no major environmental measures: no exchange, no targets, no standards, no major funding for green energy and no extension of the ecoAUTO rebate program, which my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi would have loved, I am sure.

As for regional development, there is no shift on funding for NPOs or on regional economic development, except in Ontario, which gets \$1 billion.

That reminds me of something about the coalition. One might think the opposition leader did not believe the Governor General would have accepted a coalition government. I believe she would have. She would have accepted it. But I think he got calls from Bay Street. That gives some idea of the direction the budget takes, and I could go on and on.

I also invite all the Conservative members from Quebec to vote against this budget, because it runs counter to the aspirations, the needs and especially the jurisdictions of Quebec.

•(1615)

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Sherbrooke, on that excellent speech. He talked about a number of important aspects of the budget, particularly, the lack of adequate measures to properly support people who lose their jobs. In Quebec, for instance, many people have lost, or will lose, their jobs and there is nothing in this budget to help such people through employment insurance.

*The Budget*

Two important steps would have been to eliminate the two week waiting period and to make employment insurance more accessible. However there is nothing of the sort in this budget. I wonder if the member can tell us if he saw other potential, interesting measures.

Regarding what he said about Liberal members from Quebec who cannot vote against this budget like some other Liberal members, did he hear them express such an intention? I do not believe they have indicated they will do so. Clearly, things are not going very well for them.

• (1620)

**Mr. Serge Cardin:** Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that they have not expressed their intentions. Almost the same thing happened in 1982, when 74 members voted for repatriation although the National Assembly of Quebec was against it. They voted with their party.

My colleague is quite right. When faced with an economic crisis, the main objective is to put money back into the economy. We should not just give money to the wealthiest people or most profitable companies; it should go to those who have to meet important needs and who will get the economy going again.

With regard to employment insurance claimants—given that we are talking about job losses—measures must be implemented quickly, almost immediately. We asked that the two-week waiting period be eliminated, and they added five weeks of benefits at the end. What a fine sense of urgency. What swift action. People need money when they are first unemployed and that is when they should get it.

Some seniors will receive tax refunds. But what about the supplement for those who really need it? In an economic crisis, action must be taken quickly and effectively.

I do not oppose building infrastructure. On the contrary. I was a municipal councillor for 12 years and am familiar with the situation. However, we should have started a long time ago. The plan should already have been started and underway so that, tomorrow, we could go ahead with major infrastructure, with plans, specifications, tenders. That does not equate to immediate action but we will have to keep it just the same.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's remarks. I noticed that only the Bloc Québécois copied the unanimous consensus of Quebec's National Assembly. Since we are never able to have the same consensus in this House as they have in the National Assembly, and since Quebecers are a minority here, what political option do Quebecers have if they want to control their political destiny and choices for their society?

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The member for Sherbrooke has the floor for a brief response.

**Mr. Serge Cardin:** Mr. Speaker, I heard negative remarks from the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. He has not yet understood that recognizing a nation and a national identity means that a country must be formed in order for that nation to gain freedom and to progress.

If there is a nation on this planet that is open and outward-looking, it is Quebec. With Quebec sovereignty, we never intended to pit Quebec against Canada. I am currently working on the international trade file and I would be pleased to do business with Canada.

Right now, the budget does not allow Quebec to do as it wishes with the money proposed. Sovereignty is the only solution for Quebec, and we have seen that for more than 50 years, since 1967. It is what I am hoping for, and sooner rather than later.

• (1625)

[English]

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to have the opportunity to address the House as we wind down the debate on Canada's economic action plan that is and has been before us the last couple of days.

I would like to point out that I will be splitting my time with the great member for Burlington who is just behind me and will be up in a few minutes.

This is quite an extraordinary and anxious time for Canadians, the situation we confront with the global economic turmoil with which Canada has been faced. We have seen these last few months, stretching right back to our election last fall, the pace at which things have changed and unravelled with the world economy. It has had consequences for us in the House, the kinds of questions we face and the politics we are encountering. Members from across the country have been consulting with their constituents, and I will speak to that in a few minutes.

However, there is no question that as Canada faces this time, we do so in a much stronger position than most of our partners, for example, in the G7. The work that we have done, the work that Canadians have done over the past 10 years and certainly our government over the past three and a half years has had a hand in helping to pay down our debt.

However, to give credit where credit is due, it has been the work of Canadians generally over the last 10 years that has put the country in a strong fiscal position, coming back from where we were in 1994 when our national debt against gross domestic product was into the upper reaches of the 60% mark. Yes, we are facing a difficult time, but we are in a position where we have the fiscal capacity. We are seeing that percentage of debt against GDP now down to below 30% which gives the country the ability to deal with the imperatives that are in front of us in an effective way.

On the political side, though, we are seeing regular examples in the House even now. Canadians have said very clear that this is a time when parliamentarians should be concentrating on the economic urgency before us. They should be concentrating on doing the right thing to protect Canadian jobs, to enforce and to get the right kind of policy instruments in place and interventions in our economy that will strengthen Canada's position as we get buffeted by what is happening in the world around us. Even at a time like that, we still see too many examples of parliamentarians and parties using these difficult circumstances for partisan advantage.

*The Budget*

It is not the sort of thing that Canadians appreciate seeing in the House. I certainly hope that as members reflect on some of those themes that we will see a gradual improvement in the kind of decorum that we see here in the House and certainly in all of our deliberations.

I mentioned that Canada was in a strong position relative to the G7. What becomes really important, as has been mentioned by hon. members on both sides of the House these past few days, is the deficit, the amount of debt that Canada is looking to incur to help not only provide stimulus to the economy, but also to absorb the downturn, the recession that we will encounter, albeit more slight than some of our neighbours but a slowdown nonetheless, that will cause a reduction in Canada's revenues. That will happen systematically, as it has, for example, with the reduction in commodity prices. Those are things that, to a great extent, are outside of our control but, nonetheless, they impact our fiscal position.

As I mentioned, we are in a good position to accommodate that, but as we look ahead to 2013, 2014 when Canada will get back into a surplus position, having incurred several years of deficits, even at that point, in 2013, 2014, with gradual improvement in Canada's economic position, our national debt will still be at around 30% of GDP.

• (1630)

That is an extraordinary feat when we consider that other countries, the United States in particular, were facing this recession when they were already in a serious deficit position, but not us. Relative to all of our G7 partners, we have the ability to emerge from this difficult economic time in a stronger position relative to our neighbours than we were going into it.

References have been made to Canada emerging in a stronger position. Coming out in 2013, Canada will still be in a strong position, even having made some fairly significant interventions in the economy to help protect Canadians and to improve and strengthen our industries so they will be able to compete effectively in the years ahead.

We need to be mindful that the economic plan that we set out just this week and tabled in the House builds on Canada's overall economic vision and that is encompassed in what we call Advantage Canada. The five principle themes of Advantage Canada, which this economic plan ties right into, builds on our knowledge advantage, our fiscal advantage, our entrepreneurial advantage, our tax advantage and infrastructure. These five pillars of our economic plan are emboldened by the very plan that our government has set out.

It is a plan for long term economic growth and it targets the key areas of the economy that need to be strong so that Canada's economy builds and grows stronger. What it really means is more job opportunities for Canadians, greater opportunities to generate wealth for families and the continued ability for governments to take certain dollars from Canadian taxpayers and invest those dollars in the important institutions that make our country strong. We need this strong economic plan. It is a foundation that this economic action plan can build into and continue to strengthen.

I know my time is coming to an end but I would like to make a brief comment about working with the provinces.

Over the last day or so there have been some concerns expressed about how Canada has tried to approach the difficult times in front of us and work with the provinces and territories to ensure we are doing the right thing. There is no doubt that this can be difficult. However, what I have seen, on the whole, is an attitude of cooperation and understanding of the important needs of this federation at this time. We are working together and the provinces agree.

Our government will maintain the 6% annual increase in the Canadian health transfer. We will maintain the 3% increase in the Canada social transfer. Those are important commitments that we have made to the provinces and they will continue.

On the question of equalization, the Minister of Finance was very clear the other day when he said that this was about doing the right thing for the country. As was said in the O'Brien report, equalization needs to stay on a footing that will allow it to be sustained over time. With the kind of situations that we are encountering, we must look at the equalization question, which will still increase in this coming year even though it has substantially increased some 54% in the last four to five years. Equalization will still be on a sustained footing helping provinces do what they need to do to deliver important services.

I just want to mention how important the southern Ontario development agency will be for southern Ontario. This is a part of the country that up until now has not had the kinds of tools in the kit that were needed to make those kind of interventions at the community level. It has been strong for the west, strong for Atlantic Canada and strong for Quebec. It will be a tremendous advantage for southern Ontario.

I wholly support our economic plan and look to other members to do the same.

• (1635)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's comments. I know what a hard-working MP he is and how sincere he is on his issues and his satisfaction with the budget.

I am very concerned about the budget. I am supporting it, as are most of us, but I worry about the long-term effects of the deficit and whether our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren are going to have to deal with this plan of such large spending.

Knowing my hon. colleague very well, he must have equal concerns about how this deficit will be dealt with and what the long-term plan is. Could he comment on it?

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Mr. Speaker, in many ways, I share the same views with my friend from the other side. We have worked together on different committees.

*The Budget*

This is a time when I do not think it is at all unusual to say that my constituents share the same views, and why would we not? We worked so hard to get our national debt down. To be faced with the prospect of having to go back into debt and making big interventions like this is a cause for concern. That is why we need to put it in perspective to what that debt represents against Canada's overall capacity. We need to ensure we keep that relationship in check.

However, this is a time when Canada must take the measures necessary to put confidence back in the economy, confidence so consumers will spend, so businesses will invest and so lenders will give back and provide access to capital.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's presentation on Canada's road to economic recovery. Could he comment on the comments of some Canadians and some Canadian organizations with regard to the budget?

I refer to Mr. Glen Hodgson, the chief economist at the Conference Board of Canada. He is quoted as saying, "As a package, it's a clever package and hopefully it will win the support of the House".

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said, "CFIB was pleased to see the government acknowledge its sector by raising the small business corporate income tax threshold to \$500,000 from \$400,000".

The Forest Products Association of Canada commented:

The government has clearly heard the message and embraced our vision of becoming the producers of the best quality, most innovative and greenest forest products in the world. And it understands that in order to get there Canada needs to attract investment and secure the jobs of nearly 300,000 skilled Canadians forest workers and the communities they work in.

Finally, the chief economist of the RBC Global Asset Management said:

I think there is a message for Canadians that we're cutting taxes, doing the right thing by improving access to credit for the financial system...I think overall again very important initiatives taken here to put a floor under this recession which is currently enveloped in Canada

Could the member comment on those remarks and some others that he has heard?

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member was not really trying to cut into my time, but suffice to say I agree with the comments that have been made. In fact, this budget, this economic action plan, has been embraced by communities right across the country.

There will be those who disagree, and we have some here in the House. This is normal and it is part of the process that we have in making these kinds of decision. We need to listen to that commentary, but ultimately we must move on. We must make decisions that are right for the country and right for Canadians.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, The Budget.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Burlington.

• (1640)

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Simcoe North for sharing his time with me. I also thank the member for Chatham-Kent—Essex for sharing his desk with me for this speech.

Since the budget was presented last Tuesday, we have heard a lot about it over the last number of days. There has been a lot of discussions about specifics. My goal today is talk about the economic action plan that we will vote on later this evening. Based on the information I have, I assume it will pass and the government will be able to move on and deliver some of the important items in the plan.

As we all know, we are facing a very difficult time. The action plan documentation talks about what is happening in the United States in terms of its economic situation and around the world. Therefore, Canadians are not isolated in that sense. We have to meet the challenges that the rest of the world is facing from an economic point of view, and the action plan does that.

The action plan is very comprehensive. It covers a number of areas and a number of industries. It talks about people and how we will to deal with that. It talks about infrastructure. All those components put together make up an action plan that will make a difference and will be the stimulus that we and the people of Canada have looked for so our economy will move ahead.

As has been stated by other members of the House, and by the finance minister, we are in a pretty good position in comparison to our colleagues around the world. Whether it is the United States or the European countries, we are in a very good financial position. Our banking system is solid. There are some issues obviously that we need to deal with and that is what the action plan does.

I want to speak about a few things that perhaps have not received a lot of attention in the last week, but they are in the action plan. They are important, not just to me as the chair of the GTA caucus, but also the member for Burlington, which is an urban area in southern Ontario.

First, I have been actively promoting transit and municipal infrastructure since I came to Ottawa in 2006. This action plan deals directly with those issues.

There are \$4 billion worth of infrastructure stimulus allocated in the budget. I do not want to just talk about the numbers. I want to talk about what it means to my community and the communities in the GTA.

We are facing a very difficult time in getting goods, services and people, the labour aspects, to and from work. The quality of life sitting on QEW is diminished every day as more and more people use their cars to get to and from work. The transit system is good, but it could be better. The moneys we have put forward in the infrastructure stimulus has a two year limit, so the money has to be spent and has to move. It is in partnership with our provincial counterparts. We also have the accelerated payments of \$1 billion that have already been announced. These are important investments in infrastructure that will help both the municipalities and the transit systems, an area where we think that money should be spent.

*The Budget*

We have heard from opposition members that the municipalities do not have the money. I can list quotes from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario or the Federation of Municipalities. They are all in favour of what we are doing.

I had consultations in my riding and as a member of the finance committee, we met every week prior to the budget being presented. We talked to different individuals and groups. We are talking about what we call shovel ready projects, projects that municipalities or the provinces are ready to move on. They have budgeted and approved those budgets. They are ready to go.

On occasion, we will hear from somebody from a municipality who perhaps would like something but it is not ready. That could happen in the future, but there are hundreds of projects across the country. In my riding I can name two or three projects that were approved last night in the capital budget. They are ready to go, ready to happen. They are shovel ready. In fact, I have a project that is coming up at the end of March—

**Hon. John Baird:** Can I have it?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** The minister could be invited because money is coming from his department, so he can come, but we are asking another minister to come.

• (1645)

These are projects shovel ready and ready to go. This stimulus will work.

I am also excited about the southern Ontario development agency. This project will help stimulate the economy in southern Ontario over the next five years. It is much needed.

On housing, I often hear from people in my area about housing, and it is an important issue. As the GTA caucus chair, and in my own riding of Burlington, social housing has been an issue. We are spending \$1 billion over the next two years on social housing and that money is being administered by CMHC. We are going to ensure that social housing renovations needed in our communities will happen. That is an important piece about which we have been hearing.

I have heard from others about green initiatives, that we are not doing anything green. That is not the case. There are \$1 billion in a green infrastructure fund. If the projects have merit and they produce green results, they will be funded. We have \$1 billion set aside to help develop green technology.

We have heard a lot about the home renovation tax credit. In my own riding, for example, Stats Canada did a report. It said there were about 50,000 homes in my riding. About 5% of them need repair. If we extrapolate that and if everyone does their work, taxpayers in my riding would save over \$3 million in home renovations. Hundreds of thousands of dollars would be spent, stimulating the economy, on those renovations.

On the arts and culture side, I have been very active in the performing arts area, trying to develop a performing arts centre for the city of Burlington. That is happening. I am excited about the money we will spend on the arts. The other area from a local

perspective is we have the Joseph Brant Museum. It is looking at expansion and it is getting ready to go.

In the action plan, the government has allocated \$60 million over the next two years for local museums and local theatres. These are the kinds of programs that local groups and museums can take advantage of and make things happen for the community and stimulate the economy at the same time.

As a member of the finance committee and the finance team from the Conservative side, we had meetings with individuals before the budget was presented last Tuesday. The one thing I heard over and over again was that we needed to on the work share program. The work share program in the action plan adds 14 weeks to that program. For those who do not know, if a company reduces its workforce without laying people off, it can reduce the work week, pay employees for two or three days a week and the balance is done through EI. It is a great program and we are adding 14 weeks to that program to help companies get through these tough times and help those individuals who need those jobs.

We have reduced the taxes, which is one thing that has not been mentioned a lot. We are raising the personal amount from \$9,600 to \$10,320. Every taxpayer will get a tax deduction from their basic personal tax. It is money in their pocket that they can spend to stimulate the economy. Let us be honest. What will happen is those who need the money most will take advantage of it the most. They will spend their money and that will be fantastic for their families and their communities.

I want to remind people that we are doing some work for seniors in the budget. We have added \$1,000 to the age deduction for seniors. We have kept what was in the November economic update, which is the 25% reduction in the withdrawal requirements from RRIFs. It is not getting a lot of mention, but it is very important for seniors. In fact, it affects about 2.2 million seniors.

• (1650)

In summary, a friend of mine who is a writer and a very bright individual said in his book, "It is not what you do, but it is what you do with what you do". In this action plan, what we are doing is making a difference for Canadians. We are not just sitting here doing nothing. We are taking action through our economic action plan. I ask everybody to consider that when it comes to the vote tonight.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member has experience on elected municipal council, so he brings to this House that breadth of experience. He also has enjoyed the hospitality and fine infrastructure and recreational facilities in the city of Moncton, so he brings that asset to this House as well.

*The Budget*

I do want to dig down, if I may, on his comments about and definition of shovel ready. I would like to turn that over and ask him, in his experience, whether municipalities, provincial governments and federal governments always agree on the priorities for infrastructure funding. What happens if a municipality, for instance, has applied for a project but the province does not agree with it? I am talking about the three party funding. Conversely, what if the province wants something and the federal government wants something but the municipality has not papered it yet, has not applied for it? Does he see a possibility that those projects can get completed even if they are not papered or applied for?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Speaker, I have been to Moncton and enjoyed the recreational facilities there. I have a couple of daughters who are athletes who compete nationally and I appreciate the hospitality our family received.

The issue the member presents is a very good one, but I think it is our responsibility as members of Parliament to ensure that we have lined up with the municipalities, and I have worked with my own municipality of Burlington, and with our provincial counterparts, and we all have provincial members in our ridings, to make sure that we understand that what we are looking for is shovel ready, not something that needs an environmental assessment or something that is a pipe dream for the municipality, a pipe dream for the province, or a pipe dream for the federal government.

There are billions of dollars of infrastructure projects available in Canada. I believe that if we work together, which we all claim we want to do, get rid of the rhetoric and actually do something, there are hundreds of projects that are truly shovel ready, ready to go to tender and ready to make a difference in the economy in this country.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned shovel-ready projects, but it is my understanding that under the building Canada fund there are a lot of shovel-ready projects which have not yet received money. This is what apparently the 20 or so mayors of the largest cities in Canada said at the FCM meeting a few weeks ago. I wonder if the member knows when this money will be available. If this money has not yet been made available, how can we expect that any money going into infrastructure will become available soon for those communities that need it?

With regard to employment insurance, the member talked about the system being revamped. Has the member talked to some of the 60% of the people who are not eligible for employment insurance to hear their thoughts? People are losing their jobs in communities that I represent, some of them in the forestry industry in particular and in other industries. He talked about how the EI system is supposedly working for people, but has he seen how they are suffering?

**Mr. Mike Wallace:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member one thing. Not voting for the action plan tonight will definitely stop any infrastructure projects from happening. One cannot say one thing and vote another way if one wants to see action, if one wants to see infrastructure projects in this country. In my own riding the \$1.5 million through the building Canada fund will happen at the end of March.

Things are happening with the building Canada fund, but we need to get this budget through. We need to get the implementation bill

through. We need to make things happen. As a member of parliament, I have expressed to my colleagues that the action that is needed after we pass this budget is to make sure that we deliver. I agree that we need to deliver. Canada needs these projects to be delivered. Our communities need these projects delivered and we will be delivering.

● (1655)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Guelph.

It is a great privilege to rise again in this House to offer my thoughts, opinions and some of my concerns on the government's so-called economic action plan. Call it old-fashioned, but I would much prefer to simply call it a budget. Naming the document an economic action plan suggests that it is far more grandiose than it may possibly be and I think it stretches the imagination just a bit. For me, an economic action plan would have more imagination, coherence and compassion, so it is a budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you will not remember, but the first time I rose to speak was on November 27, just minutes before the Minister of Finance presented his now infamous economic and fiscal statement. The minister's fiscal update was as audacious as it was inaccurate, as presumptuous as it was pompous, and as fatuous as it was fictitious. It sadly underestimated the serious nature of the economic downturn in Canada and gravely underestimated the tenacity and the persistence of the opposition parties to stand up for Canadians, particularly the most vulnerable among us. In a word, it did not wash.

However, it did get this House and indeed the whole country talking about the true state of Canada's economy and the uncertainty that grips many households in our country this day. For this we strangely thank the minister and give him a vote of confidence at least to that degree. Canadians have been in conversation about these serious matters in coffee shops, at dinner tables and on the Internet, largely spurred on by their perception that the finance minister and the government had its collective head in the sand. Thanks to that, a great conversation has been going on from coast to coast to coast.

Many on this side of the House would like to take credit for all the significant changes the Minister of Finance included in the budget speech that were not indicated in the fiscal update. I think, however, that sells Canadians short. Of course we had a role to play in the minister's about-face, but the larger role was played by the citizens of this country who simply knew that they had to make their concerns heard. They had to tell their stories.

*The Budget*

Over the holiday break, I suspect that members on the government side heard much of what we heard as well. Seniors are worried about depleted savings and precarious pensions. Workers are worried about reduced hours and layoff notices. Employers are worried about shrinking foreign and domestic orders. Store owners are worried about inventory growing as people become increasingly cautious about spending their money. Food bank volunteers are worried about shrinking donations and growing lineups. Small business owners are struggling to find financial institutions willing to lend them the money they need to keep going. Newcomers to Canada and young people are pounding the pavement hoping to find their first job, yet they are finding the pavement pounding right back at them. On the upside, one credit counsellor and trustee in bankruptcy told me that business had never been better. Times are tough and are getting tougher out there and we have been hearing about it.

In presenting his budget last week, the Minister of Finance has shown at least some capacity to listen and to learn from this great conversation that he, and humbly I would add, perhaps something from this side of the House as well, provoked. For that, I commend him. I would have to say it appears that having listened, he added just a touch of red dye to what would otherwise have been a deeply blue budget. At best, it has taken on a purplish hue, which is probably the best we can ask for from the minister.

I am not suggesting it would be easy for any government or finance minister to chart a course through this global economic mess, but this budget could have been so much better. What has stunned me about it is its utter lack of imagination, its lack of coherency and its lack of compassion for the most vulnerable. It portrays a government that does not really believe that government can and must be a force for good. At best, it is a grudging nod to the public sector's role in helping our economy through rough waters while ensuring that Canadians survive the turbulence. At worst, it suggests a sheep in wolf's clothing. Think about what some imagination, coherence and compassion could do in this budget. Here are just a few examples.

● (1700)

On imagination, the Conservatives offer \$1 billion for development of green technology, mostly directed at unproven methods to capture and store carbon. Where is the support for alternative energy sources? What of conservation? We live in a time when global warming threatens to destroy our planet. At the same time, contractors need work. Trained and skilled workers are available. Why has the government missed the opportunity for a nationwide program to retrofit houses and green the apartment, condo and business towers of this country?

On coherence, we see \$2 billion thrown at affordable housing as a one time use it or lose it effort while the minister responsible proudly states that no one should infer that the government actually has a national housing strategy. Perish the thought that the government would take seriously its role in ensuring that every Canadian has a roof over his or her head while creating jobs at the same time.

On compassion, if the government were serious about helping the hardest hit in this time of economic upheaval, less focus would be put on rewarding people for building a new deck or installing a new jacuzzi, which they are probably going to do anyway, and more

thought would have been given to opening access to employment insurance and extending benefits to those already covered. Only 42% of those currently jobless qualify for EI and the payments start too late, are too small and end too soon. This is not a new problem, nor is the lack of compassion shown by the government.

I will be supporting this budget. Perhaps I am as grudging in my support as the government is in its spending plan, but even in my support, I will be watching for the money to flow, watching for jobs to be created, watching for the vulnerable to be cared for, and watching for some sense of imagination, some coherence and some compassion to flow from the government as well.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope that the member's speech is not followed by a parliamentary crisis as was the last speech the member gave. It was a very good speech and I congratulate him on this second speech in the House.

Does the hon. member think it would have been visionary for the government to implement the recommendation that was contained in a *Globe and Mail* article, that the employment insurance program be revamped and used as a countercyclical economic instrument? Quite apart from the fact that it should be a compassionate program, if we put compassion aside and look at it from the point of view of a steely-eyed, cold-hearted neo-conservative economist, would it be a good countercyclical program?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member, in referring to that economist in his statement, was thinking of the Prime Minister .

Absolutely, the answer is yes. Employment insurance was never meant to be a static plan for all regions, for all times, for all places and for all people. It is meant to be a plan that is flexible and that moves and changes as the times change. Absolutely I believe that employment insurance is a valid and very important instrument to be used to spur on economic development.

We have to keep money flowing. We know that when people are unemployed they are often one cheque away from paying the rent, from feeding their family, from getting the work done that needs to get done. That money is not socked away. That is not money that is stuffed into a mattress. It is money that is spent. Absolutely, that money should be increased.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my Liberal colleague's leader announced today that the six Liberal members of Parliament from Newfoundland and Labrador will be given permission to vote against the budget in a symbolic protest to the budget. What about the other 71 members of the Liberal caucus? I just heard the member for Don Valley West recite a pretty good speech criticizing the budget, going up one side and down the other, saying how abysmal it was, what a failure it was, a catastrophic failure of vision. He used very romantic language. One cannot oppose the Conservative government and support the Conservative government at the same time, or at least, I do not believe it can be done.

**An hon. member:** Well, you are not a Liberal.

*The Budget*

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague says it is because I am not Liberal.

I am going to ask the member, by what pretzel reasoning does my Liberal colleague find it in his heart to be able to stand up and make that speech, and then stand up half an hour from now and vote for the very budget that he dumped all over with such great eloquence?

• (1705)

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Mr. Speaker, it is totally interesting to be on this side of the House. This is not a Liberal budget. In every way the budget shines as not being a Liberal budget, so of course we are critical of it. Once we had read it, once we had a look at it, once we examined it, we saw both its flaws and also areas where the government had learned something, unlike the New Democrats, who refused to even read it before they decided to vote against it. This is part of parliamentary democracy, part of making this country work. I pledged to my constituents that when I came here, I would find a way to make this work. We are trying to make this work. We will hold the government accountable. We will hold it responsible.

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member across the way for indicating that he will certainly support this good economic statement and plan to help fix the economy here in Canada.

It is interesting that one of the things he talked about was infrastructure and getting it out there. We heard our colleague from the NDP down at the far end talking about not supporting the budget. Of course, the two of them will certainly have to work that out. I hear our colleague at the other end indicating that there is some hypocrisy. Would the member also not say that while the member down there indicates that he is against the budget, he is the first one with his hand out, wanting a cheque for his riding?

**Mr. Robert Oliphant:** Those are that member's words, Mr. Speaker. I would say that my job as the member of Parliament for Don Valley West is watching where the government spends this money, how it creates jobs and what gets done. The hon. member will see me at Union Station, downtown Toronto, making sure that commuters have a way to get on the train safely and to get into and out of the city safely. I will be watching for those projects. I will be watching for the money to flow. We are putting the government on probation. We are watching. We will see what happens.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in this House today and offer my thoughts on the federal budget that we have before us.

I wish to thank one more time the people of Guelph for expressing their confidence in me to represent their interests. I intend to make every effort to meet their expectations.

Following the election of October 14 of last year, I fully expected to see the imminent introduction of an economic stimulus package to guide Canada through the economic crisis. Indeed, such a package was promised by the Prime Minister at the APEC G20 summit. As a newly elected member of Parliament, that was the one thing that seemed assured, since the Prime Minister had given his word. It seemed to me that there was no doubt that Canada's federal government would have an obligation, a duty, to move Canada forward through recession. Alas, it was not forthcoming.

Canadians are nervous and concerned. Whether I am on the doorstep seeking campaign support, visiting the vendors at the Guelph farmers market on Saturday morning, or attending a round table discussion with social service agencies, the fear and worry is palpable. People in Guelph who have gone to the same jobs for 30 years are now seeing those jobs disappear. People are wondering if they should return to school for the duration of the recession. Others are looking to downsize their homes, while many more are struggling and sadly failing to pay their rents or their mortgages.

The last thing I expected when I first took my seat here in this House was for Parliament to sit for three weeks and then for the Prime Minister to break his word and send me home for seven weeks, his very first act as Prime Minister of Canada's 40th Parliament. I do not have the extensive experience of many of my colleagues, but to date, the 40th Parliament has seemed to be a series of unfortunate events and crises, brought about solely and irresponsibly by the Prime Minister.

I took advantage of the constituency time to conduct round tables and to visit families, businesses and organizations across Guelph. Guelph's economy is based in manufacturing and particularly the auto parts industry. The auto industry is facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the global credit crisis. I advocated for and continue to support the government's extension of immediate bridge financing to assist the auto industry, provided it is able to honour a commitment to reasonable terms and conditions.

There is no doubt that Canada's auto manufacturers must do business differently to succeed in today's economy. I am optimistic the auto industry's continued transition to advance flexible manufacturing plants, more environmentally conscious production and the introduction of more fuel efficient, greener vehicles will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the auto industry. Our community depends upon a prosperous auto industry.

The downturn in the economy reaches every corner of my community. The Guelph food bank has seen a 19% increase in demand for services. The United Way of Guelph and Wellington has seen a withdrawal of pledges made by as much as \$150,000. Social services is seeing a sharp increase in Ontario Works applications. Times are tough and getting tougher.

We on this side of the House were clear and concise in our expectations for the federal budget. We asked for initiatives to protect the most vulnerable in Canadian society, minimize job losses, create employment opportunities, provide economic stimulus in a fair manner, and ensure the deficit is not a long-term burden.

The budget represents a marked improvement from the disastrous economic and fiscal update that we saw last fall, but if we have learned one thing from the Prime Minister, it is that we can expect a vast degree of separation in what he says and what he does. That is why the government is on probation. That is why the Liberal opposition will babysit this budget's implementation and execution every step of the way.

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Canada has limited resources in a difficult time. We need to make the investments that create jobs and get results for the communities. Like other communities across the country, Guelph has been impacted by the recent economic crisis. In speaking with the mayor of Guelph, I know that an acceleration of infrastructure spending is urgently needed to help create jobs and stimulate our local economy.

● (1710)

Guelph is not alone in this urgency. Cities and communities right across Canada need quality infrastructure, the foundation of a strong economy into the future.

I have also met with the director of housing in Guelph and we are both interested in the Conservative government's new-found interest in affordable housing. We are anxious to see this commitment flow into Guelph to improve access to much needed affordable housing while supporting the residential construction and development industry.

Jobs have been lost while the Conservative government broke its promises to cities and communities. Nearly \$8 billion, the highest level in years, was promised but not spent by the government.

Thousands of jobs have disappeared while the government sat on almost 10% of its appropriated funds. In the midst of an economic crisis, with job cuts hitting every community, the government has a track record of failing to deliver on its promises.

Time is of the essence in providing a stimulus package that can help maintain and create jobs in our local communities. It is my hope that the government will make good use of this opportunity to deliver on its budget. Part of that must include streamlining the federal infrastructure programs, so that funding can flow and projects can begin. My constituency of Guelph has a number of infrastructure projects that are ready to proceed when funding is available.

The University of Guelph is Canada's premier research university. When we look at environmental technologies, our food supply, water management, alternative fuels, manufacturing materials made from non-food agricultural products, we can identify research programs that are undertaken at the University of Guelph.

Research and development is essential as our economy moves away from a traditional manufacturing base and into a knowledge-based economy. Our commitment to research and our ability to attract and keep research talent is a vital part of Canada's competitiveness. It is incredibly disturbing that the budget makes no mention of Genome Canada, the only agency that regularly finances large scale science in Canada, and mentions cuts to funding to SHERC, NSERC and health research.

We see our neighbours to the south providing an economic stimulus plan that includes almost \$4 billion for research. Without a mention in the Canadian budget, we are going to lose our best and brightest research talent unless we demonstrate a commitment and a vision for research in Canada.

I have heard from University of Guelph professors so discouraged that they are considering moving to the United States where there is clarity in investment in research. Canadians are looking to the House to make responsible decisions and act for the good of our entire country. In times of economic turmoil, government must provide

leadership through short-term hardship and a vision to embrace the economy of the future.

We will be doing our part on this side of the House to ensure the government accepts and fulfills its responsibilities. I ask the government to please fulfill its responsibilities.

● (1715)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member certainly did a good job of pointing out some serious issues. He shares the same concerns as I and many in my party in the official opposition about the long-term impact of the deficit that we are all facing and the lack of a credible plan.

I would like to ask him about seniors. There is next to nothing in the budget for seniors. I think there is an increase of 50¢ a day in one analysis, but there is very little else in the budget when it comes to helping seniors. I would like to hear his comments on both the issue of the deficit as well as the issue of additional help for seniors.

**Mr. Francis Valeriotte:** Mr. Speaker, I too share the same concern for the long-term deficit. I frankly see no exit strategy implemented or recited in this particular budget. I have children. Many of us have children and grandchildren who we do not want to see bear the burden of the deficit that will result from this budget.

I can only hope that when it comes time to deal with that deficit, the Liberals will be back in power. Just as we had to wrestle the deficit down that Mr. Mulroney left us with in the nineties, we will be in a position to do that very same thing when we are returned to power. I have had many round tables with seniors in Guelph and they too have expressed concern about the lack of any meaningful policy in the budget that deals with their plight. We on this side of the House will be pressing the government post-budget to develop a more meaningful response to the needs of seniors.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been my guiding purpose in this House to stand for people who work hard, pay their taxes and play by the rules. I speak of those quiet souls who live in the suburbs, villages and countryside of my riding. While members across the way may mock such people, I speak of those quiet souls who live in my community, and around this place we do not hear enough from them.

After all, they do not have money for lobbyists, nor do they have time to attend protests, and they have none of the intemperance to demand more from others. They are too busy working, too busy taking children to hockey and soccer, too busy volunteering for their favourite charity. They are the carpenters and the cab drivers, waitresses and welders, builders and bricklayers, farmers and fishermen, engineers and entrepreneurs. An honest day's work is their request and the fruits of their labour are their reward.

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So how can I honour that request and how can that reward be fulfilled? First, we can start by giving such people back what is theirs by lowering their taxes. Since taking office, we have lifted the heavy weight of government off of their backs. Because of this Prime Minister, they can now invest in the economy and enjoy the fruits of their investment with a tax-free savings account. Because of our Prime Minister, they can buy goods and services that their families need and pay less GST. Because of our Prime Minister, the average taxpayer in this country pays \$1,500 less than before. Because of our Prime Minister, thousands more pay no taxes at all.

The second thing we must do is work in this House for these silent voices and not for the privileged interest groups that are here so often to ask for more of what others earn.

Take, for example, the Ottawa transit strike. After 51 days of gridlock and half a billion dollars in economic costs, our government moved to take the actions that ultimately ended that strike. Those in Ottawa know that throughout this time it has been fairly difficult. The Queensway has been a parking lot, seniors could not get their medication, employees could not get to work, and the poor and the most vulnerable could not get anywhere.

The noble purpose of protecting the downtrodden long ago gave birth to the union movement. How ironic, then, that this same union with this strike so punished Ottawa's most vulnerable. One lady of modest means in our community said that the strike effectively cut off her arms and legs. Another strike victim, named Anna, suffered most of all. The union strike forced her to walk 18 kilometres from her home at Bronson and Carling to her job in my neighbourhood of Barrhaven. A good Samaritan discovered her roadside in -25° weather. To get to and from work she had been walking a total of 12 hours a day.

The union bosses had demanded more “uncertified” sick days, that is, days off without a doctor's note. Like most people in the real world, Anna cannot take uncertified sick days until the strike is over. The union bosses demanded control over their work schedules, but like most people in the real world, Anna certainly did not have the ability to set her own schedule. Like most people in the real world, she was not able to simply go on strike when the going got tough. She has a living to earn, taxes to pay, responsibilities to meet and a sense of duty to shoulder. She has to live in the real world, and by moving to order the bus drivers back to work, we demonstrated that we do too.

• (1720)

I doubt that we will see her around this place lobbying or demanding more from others, but that does not change the central purpose of my seat in this House. My duty is to people like Anna and others, to those who work hard, to those who give what they can, to those who build this country. They work for their families, for their communities and for their country, and it is our duty to work for them.

• (1725)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Nepean—Carleton, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, for an excellent speech. I agree with him that essential services to Canadians are important at this time of

economic uncertainty. I also agree with him that we are here as representatives of the people. Certainly in my case of Ottawa West—Nepean, which is next door to his constituency, I am here to speak for those who perhaps do not have the loudest voice. I thought he gave an excellent speech. He fights hard for his constituents, and we are certainly very grateful.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, as I stated at the outset, it is our role here to stand for those people who, while they do not cry with the loudest voice and may not be here regularly to demand more of what others earn, are the backbone of this country. They work for Canada, and therefore we should work for them.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his discussion and particularly for his comments about women.

In my riding 25% of families are headed by single parents, the vast majority of them women. I have two questions: what would the government's proposed agenda to remove women's right to use the courts to obtain pay equity mean for these families? I believe the member talked about Anna. What would it mean to children who are poor because their mothers are poor, to child care, and to early childhood education?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that single mothers make up a large portion of her constituency. Those are the exact people of whom I was speaking in my address when I said that we should stand for those people who may not have the loudest voice in the halls of power, but who nonetheless do the great work of raising our next generation, working hard in the jobs of today and building for the future of tomorrow.

I thank the member very much for raising their voice in the House of Commons. This government believes in pay equity, and that is why we have instituted in this budget, which I gather she will be supporting, a process that will allow pay equity to occur immediately, so that women do not have to fight for 10 and 15 years to obtain those precious rights that it is our duty to uphold. I thank her for raising that point. I also thank her for supporting the efforts that we in this government are undertaking to uphold that valued principle of pay equity.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the government, even with a deathbed conversion, has decided to support an infrastructure program. When the Conservatives became the government in 1984, they let it lie dormant for 10 years and refused to fund cities, towns and villages across this country with needed infrastructure.

*The Budget*

Today the Federation of Canadian Municipalities said that we have a \$128 billion deficit. I ask the member how we are going to roll out the infrastructure projects in this country so that cities, towns and communities are able to access them quickly, with not a lot of red tape, yet with transparency and accountability. I am fascinated to know how a party that never supported infrastructure is going to make sure that we can have access. What timeline is the government looking at?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right to point out that the government has invested more in infrastructure than has any government in Canadian history.

He is also right to identify that our priority is to see that money translates into roads, bridges, trains and tunnels, real results in the communities we represent.

Our goal is not to spend money. Our goal is to build things and to create jobs while doing it. That is why the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, whose voice we heard earlier, and whose voice some believe they hear too often—

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

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I was distracted for a second. The minister's voice is often heard, and it will be heard right across this land with the clanging of hammers and the rustling of machines that will be building tomorrow's infrastructure. He will eliminate the regulation and the red tape that gets between us and the rubber meeting the road, and he will get the job done.

• (1730)

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise and contribute to this budget debate, especially in light of the fact that in approximately one hour the budget will be determined in the House.

On December 7, 1867, Prime Minister Sir John A Macdonald's finance minister, Sir Alexander Galt, tabled Canada's first ever budget. It was a modest effort by today's standard, just \$5.3 million in government spending. It included a rather sizable surplus of \$2.1 million.

Since then, members of this hallowed House have debated 142 budgets, 22 mini-budgets, interim budgets and economic updates tabled by 38 different finance ministers. They have debated them in high and in low economic times. They have approved spectacular surpluses and devastating deficits.

There is perhaps no better historical indicator of the ups and downs of prosperity and recession than the federal budget, and this year's is certainly no exception.

However, this budget, Canada's 143rd, is in many ways unlike any this country has ever seen. In years past, when governments faced financial peril and wrestled with the notion of deficit spending, they did so largely from self-inflicted economic conditions. Challenges relating to dwindling revenues and a waning economy could usually be traced to something domestic: a short-sighted policy decision or some kind of over-regulation for example.

Unfortunately, in 2009 Canada has entirely imported this economic turbulence. Let me be perfectly clear. What we face today has absolutely nothing to do with Canada. Canada did not issue

billions in questionable mortgages to under-qualified applicants. Canada did not turn a blind eye to its lending institutions as they passed around bad debt like a hot potato. Canada did not tell American banks to close their wallets and did not tell consumers to stop opening theirs.

In fact, while the American economy spiralled into oblivion, Canada continued to adhere to its high standards of fiscal regulation and prudent budgeting.

I was taught at a young age to never live beyond my means. It is something that I still hold strong to today. Whether it is a household, a corporate venture or a government, they will always be on solid ground provided they do not spend more than they take in. When they do so, invariably there will be consequences.

Canada was not living beyond its means when this economic storm hit. Regardless, here we are facing a once in a generation economic downturn. We are not in this alone. This economic torrent is pulling the world into a tailspin, swiftly dragging economies into recession and governments into deficit, regardless of how innocent or how guilty they were in forging this crisis.

Canada, by every economic indicator, is in the best shape of any G7 country to weather the economic storm.

In Alberta, where I come from, we are particularly insulated but by no means immune to the economic downturn. Stimulating demand and investing in public infrastructure is need even in Alberta.

I am here to tell the House why I believe that the government's economic action plan is the answer to our nation's economic woes and why a short term deficit with targeted stimulus measures is the best and perhaps the only way to restore prosperity to this great country.

This was the earliest budget in modern Canadian history. It was by far the most widely consulted budget ever undertaken. It represents a product of the consultative process and the input of literally thousands of Canadians.

We do not relish deficit financing. It is with a heavy heart that we announced the \$34 billion in projected revenue shortfall. However, extraordinary circumstances require extraordinary measures.

I am one of the many small *c* conservatives in the House. As we all know, we do not always respond favourably to the *d* word. During my years as a member of the Alberta legislature, the thought of running a deficit would have been unthinkable. However, if ever there was a time to set aside political dogmas, this is it.

*The Budget*

The last thing Canada needs right now is a chamber full of ideologues trying to score style points in an age old debate that will never be resolved. We need to get on with the business of managing the economy and that is exactly what the budget proposes to do. If it means a deficit, so be it.

However, let us look past the ugliness associated with the word “deficit” and focus on what it will mean for Canada.

● (1735)

First, it will mean jobs. One of the earliest Public Works projects commissioned in Canada lies just down the street from this House: the Rideau Canal. For five years, the British Crown employed thousands of workers to build a waterway. Ever since then, public infrastructure projects have been some of the best ways to get Canadians working and the economy moving. With just over \$7 billion in provincial and municipal infrastructure stimulus over the next two years, a host of new construction jobs will soon be available to Canadians.

Second, it will mean savings. The tax relief measures in this budget will save Canadians a total of \$20 billion over the next five years, which means more money in their pockets when they need a cushion the most. In challenging economic times, tax reductions are an essential part of the government's effort to stimulate the economy. By increasing the personal deduction to \$10,320 and by raising the upper limits of the two lowest tax brackets, we would allow hard-working Canadians to keep but, hopefully, spend more of their hard-earned money.

Third, it will mean homes. This budget aims to help Canadians secure affordable and reliable forms of housing. By providing tax incentives for home renovations, shoring up social housing and easing the burden for first-time homebuyers, Canadians will have access to decent housing when they need stability the most.

Fourth, it will mean commerce. This budget makes specific and pointed investments in several ailing sectors of our economy and reduces operating costs for all small businesses. These investments should jolt sectors like forestry and agriculture back into action when Canadians need healthy markets the most.

Finally, it will mean credit. One of the biggest drivers of the recession has been a lack of available credit to help families adapt and businesses expand. Increased small business borrowing limits and more flexible crown financing institutions will mean more available money when Canadians need cashflow the most.

If that is what running a deficit means, especially at this extraordinary time in our nation's history, then I cannot possibly be against it. If we must go down the road of deficit financing, we should do it now when the price of borrowing is low. If we want to add infrastructure, we should do it now when the price of steel and skilled labour is significantly reduced.

It must be noted that there is nothing in this budget that even hints at the possibility of deficits once again becoming the norm in this country. Canada has been down that path before and it bogged us down in terms of productivity and economic growth.

This government has absolutely no intention of lulling Canadians back into accepting annual or structural deficits. The way this budget

is structured, we will be back into surplus within five years, by which time, I should add, Canada will have by far the lowest debt to GDP ratio of any G7 country. If there is such a thing as a fiscally responsible deficit, I would suggest that this is it.

Earlier in my speech I said that this budget was unlike any this country has ever seen. Given the extraordinary measures contained in it, I am sure most members would agree. However, every Canadian budget, all 143 of them since Confederation, have one thing in common: they were all crafted with the utmost consideration for the people of this great nation.

Similarly, the stimulus measures contained in budget 2009 may appear surprising, evening shocking, to a nation that has become accustomed to annual surpluses but they appear that way for a reason. These are extraordinary times and so too must be our response.

In that sense, it is not about comparing the strength of Canada's balance sheet to that of other nations or to the balance sheets of the past. It is not about bailing out one sector of the economy and not another. It is not about spending hikes or tax cuts. It is not even about the deficit. Quite simply, it is about doing what is best for the Canadian economy at this extraordinary time.

Today I would urge members on both sides of this House to consider what the course of action would look like. In my view, Canada's economic action plan is the right response to this unprecedented economic downturn, and I congratulate the Minister of Finance for presenting it one week ago. It recognizes the need for sector specific inducements but at the same time acknowledges that the Canadian economy will only be as successful as her citizens. The economic action plan provisions, especially in housing, will create new demands and, with improved access to credit, the market will be much better equipped to meet them.

Of course I support Canada's economic action plan. This budget is responsible. It is a measured response to an international and extraordinary circumstance. It is my sincere hope that all members of this assembly will carefully consider these measures and draw the same conclusions as I have.

With thousands of Canadians losing their jobs, Canadians expect their government to take decisive action. The economic stimulus package contained in the economic action plan will put displaced Canadians back to work while building much needed public works and infrastructure.

● (1740)

Compromise is a part of the Canadian tradition. Canada's economic action plan is both a product of its unprecedented consultative process—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I must stop the hon. member there to allow questions and comments.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for his speech. He made a number of insightful comments. I want to talk about two things he raised, one being credit.

*The Budget*

The Minister of Finance has done a lot to tackle that issue, working with many others. He spoke about that in his constituency. Whether it is with large enterprises, small or medium sized ones or individuals, this continues to be a significant challenge in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean.

The member also spoke about infrastructure. The public service has done a huge amount of work putting together an infrastructure package and doing what we can to speed up approvals. I congratulate the Minister of Finance and Adam Chambers from his office who worked very hard on this.

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hard work that the Minister of Infrastructure is doing and the process that he and his department have had in promoting this economic package.

Clearly Canadians require stimulus at this time. Public Works and Infrastructure has long been a part of the Canadian tradition, from the national railway that our first prime minister undertook to the impressive projects that this government will be undertaking. I congratulate the Minister of Infrastructure for his contribution to the economic stimulus package.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the member say that the government was heading into what he called a responsible deficit. I think that is a bit of an oxymoron, but in any event, having been parliamentary secretary to two ministers of finance I can tell members how difficult it is to get out of a deficit. A short term deficit over 23 years, there is no such thing as short term. I am not sure where he gets this idea that in five years we will eliminate this massive deficit that we have. I know that the Conservatives had a \$12.5 billion surplus when they entered government. I know that they had a \$13 billion deficit prior to the stimulus package.

I have a question concerning infrastructure. When will we see timelines to deal with needed infrastructure in this country, to deal with the situation that cities, towns and communities have in terms of not only putting people to work but ensuring we have an economic package that will deal with the definite needs for communities dealing particularly with green infrastructure, sewers, clean water, et cetera?

We need to have that rolled out soon. I am sure his colleague next to him knows the short timeline we have for construction season. We need to get that out there. Mayors need to know when it will be rolled out. I would like to hear from the member when that will happen. It is too bad the minister is still not here because I am sure the minister could have whispered over to him the timeline. If the government has announced it, surely it knows when it will do it.

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, I think I posed it as a query in my comments as to whether or not there was such a thing as a responsible deficit, but I would advocate that if there is such a thing this is it because these are extraordinary times where Canada is heading into economic turmoil beyond its control with the potential for a large downturn in economic growth, and of course the job losses that come with it.

With respect to the second part of his comment and question, the Minister of Infrastructure has laid out a five point plan. We are in the process of approving projects. Shovel-ready projects of course will be the first to go. Other projects will be rolled out. These are the

types of projects that will immediately put money back into the economy and put Canadians back to work.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his excellent speech and for his view. It was a Canadian view that he gave on what was happening for the country. Not all the views in this House are the same in terms of looking at what is best for Canadians overall.

Would there be an item or two in the economic action plan that will have a direct effect on his riding that he would like to highlight to this House?

• (1745)

**Mr. Brent Rathgeber:** Mr. Speaker, the home renovation tax credit program is a program that I believe many constituents in northwest Edmonton and the city of St. Albert will be able to access.

Many projects have been put off for a considerable period of time. As is reasonably well-known in this House, until very recently Alberta has had an overcharged economy and as a result was frequently unable to find tradespersons to do that type of work. At this point in our economy it is slowing down and workers are available. I think the people in my riding and all over Alberta will take advantage of the \$1,350 maximum tax credit to do some renovations to their homes and to put some tradespeople back to work.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents in my riding of Winnipeg Centre, I am pleased to enter the debate on budget 2009 even at this late hour, perhaps even at the last speaking opportunity as we go into the final stage of this debate which will be the vote. I fully expect this budget to pass, knowing what we know about the intentions of the official opposition, although I do not believe the Liberals deserve that title any longer. My colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay suggested that they folded like cheap suits at the first little bit of pressure. Not once, not twice, but 45 times in a row the Liberals have supported the Conservative government.

Canadians across the country were interested when there was talk of a coalition being formed in Parliament for the first time in Canadian history. They are still amused if not interested in the fact that a new coalition has formed, and that is between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party.

The new leader of the Liberal Party has proven himself to be nothing more than the Prime Minister's poodle, and I do not say that with any disrespect to poodles. The Liberal leader is the kind of man who surrenders unconditionally and then calls a press conference declaring victory. The galling thing is the monumental hypocrisy of the Liberals who stand up and speaker after speaker condemn the budget as being inadequate, as being an affront to women's rights. I cannot even remember all the eloquent speeches made by Liberals condemning this budget, yet in 15 or 20 minutes I am pretty sure we will see most Liberals stand up and vote for this budget.

*The Budget*

What did they bargain for? What was the hard bargaining that the leader of the Liberal Party undertook in exchange for his support? I remember when the NDP had some bargaining leverage in a previous minority Parliament. We traded our support for a Liberal budget for \$4.8 billion worth of spending that we thought was important. What did the leader of the Liberal Party trade? Reports and putting the Conservatives on probation. My colleagues in the Conservative Party are trembling at that prospect. I have actually heard them chuckling to themselves about the deal they got. Talk about Jack and the beanstalk and trading in the family cow for three beans, well that is the proportion of the trade that we saw. Criminals all across the country are hoping for a parole officer like the leader of the Liberal opposition.

The current leader of the Liberals is doing a remarkable job of making the former leader of the Liberal Party look like a pretty good leader. We did not know that was possible.

Here is his bargaining stance. I can show the bargaining stance of the leader of the Liberal Party when he was negotiating with the Conservatives. It was like this: "Please, please leave us with some dignity, please. Don't make me go to the people and get the crap kicked out of us, please". That was the bargaining stance of the leader of the official opposition.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am not sure if the hon. member's posture was unparliamentary, but it was certainly creating a little bit of disorder. Maybe we could pay attention to the hon. member's remarks, and then if people have questions or comments there will be time to do that.

The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if I lapsed into anything unparliamentary in my language.

The point I am trying to make is that we are faced with competing visions. Let us talk about this in more detail. It is the tale of two countries that are in economic crisis in North America, at least the two countries that are the greatest trading partners. The United States and Canada have found themselves in this global economic turmoil. There are competing visions and competing approaches taken in the two countries.

The President of the United States has put forward a stimulus package that is absolutely transformative. It is inspirational. It is going to change the old carbon based economy to one which the current president acknowledges is necessary to move forward into the next century, a green economy, a sustainable economy, and all the job creation and growth that can come out of that new sustainable economy. In our country we have a budget, a stimulus package which, by comparison, is narrow, small, without direction, without substance and tainted by politics and ideology.

Barrack Obama worked real magic in revitalizing not only his economy, but the sagging morale of his nation. His message of hope is sweeping the land and elevating the hearts and minds of the people he represents. Obama is a sorcerer working real magic.

By comparison, the Minister of Finance is like some road weary carnival magician, pulling sedated bunnies out of a tattered old top hat and saying, "Ta-dah and voilà, another magic trick", and all it really is is a tired old tweaking of program spending. There is

nothing inspirational or transformative about what he has shown us. In fact, it is inadequate and fails the test.

Canadians are not inspired by this budget. Canadians across the country are pointing out the shortfalls of the budget. Canadians, even members of the Liberal Party, are standing up and objecting to the point where the Liberal Party leader announced today that six of his Newfoundland and Labrador MPs are being permitted to vote against the budget in a "symbolic" protest. It has to be asked, what about the other 71 members of the Liberal caucus?

In the last Parliament the former leader of the Liberal Party kicked Joe Comuzzi out of the Liberal caucus just for saying he would vote against party lines on the budget. The current leader of the Liberal Party has not taken any such leadership, maybe because if he kicked out all those who object to the budget, there would be very little left of his caucus.

There are some women members of the Liberal caucus who have long defended women's right to equal pay for work of equal value. Will they be allowed to vote against the budget? That is a question that comes to mind.

The Liberal MP for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour has been standing on his feet in the House complaining about the shortcomings in the budget on the EI fund. Will he be allowed to vote against the budget?

What about Quebec which has 14 Liberal MPs? It is losing \$770 million in the budget.

Prince Edward Island with three Liberal MPs is losing \$12 million in health funding. Will they have the same permission as their counterparts from Newfoundland to vote against the budget?

Manitoba is losing \$13 million in health care by virtue of this budget. No self-respecting member of Parliament from my home province of Manitoba should be voting for this budget and endorsing those millions of dollars of cuts.

The mayor of Toronto, the city that includes the Liberal leader's own riding, has openly condemned the budget as not protecting the most vulnerable. Will the 21 GTA Liberal MPs be allowed to show their disapproval?

This is the frustration Canadians have with the Liberal Party generally. They are chameleons. They are contortionists. They use pretzel logic to rationalize virtually anything, so we never know what they stand for. We cannot take anything to the bank.

As for our coalition, it is a good thing we did not shake hands on it because that lasted for a couple of weeks until at the very first sign of pressure the Liberals folded like a cheap suit.

● (1750)

We are pointing out shortcomings in the budget to the Canadian public so they will know who is standing up for Canadians, so they will know who is standing up as the real opposition to the budget. One simply cannot simultaneously oppose the budget and then vote for it in the same breath. There is a saying that one cannot suck and blow at the same time, but we are about to see a graphic illustration of how this is possible, if we stick around for another couple of minutes and watch the vote on the budget.

### *The Budget*

Time does not permit me to go through technical details of the budget, nor do we really need to, so I will restrict my remarks to two areas that I find to be abject failures.

The first is with respect to the employment insurance program. In my home province of Manitoba, 67.5% of unemployed people are ineligible for any EI benefits. This program is a catastrophic failure. An insurance program is supposed to provide income maintenance in times of crisis. When someone loses his or her job, he or she should be able to apply for EI and draw from it. It is mandatory to pay into it, but less than 40% of Canadians can get anything out of it when they are in need. That is a cash cow for the government. It is a licence to print money.

EI is no longer an insurance policy. It is a tax on every paycheque. What if it was house insurance and it was mandatory to pay into it and on the day the house burns down there is less than a 40% chance of being able to collect anything? We would say we had been ripped off. That has been the history of the EI system for decades. When the Liberals gutted the EI program, they took \$20.8 million per year out of my riding alone in income maintenance benefits. No one has ever corrected this.

Now that we are in a genuine economic crisis, we expect the government of the day to fix the eligibility criteria of the EI program so that more people qualify. I was honestly amazed when the government chose not to deal with the eligibility criteria and only added five weeks to the benefits for those who are already collecting. That is not good enough.

Let me speak about the apprenticeship system. I am a journeyman carpenter by trade. I represented carpenters through the carpenters union throughout my working life. Apprentices are penalized a waiting period when they leave their job to do the school component of their apprenticeship. They are not unemployed. Why do they have a two week waiting period? Part of the deal was that they would leave their job and go to school for six weeks and then return to the job.

Those things could have been fixed and could have been addressed easily in this budget without a great deal of cost because the money is in the EI fund. It is not the government's money. It is the money of the employer and the employee.

The only other specific detail that I will address in the short time I have is the energy retrofit program for housing. I raise the Barack Obama model for the U.S. recovery and stimulus program. I will point out the glaring inadequacies of our program as contemplated by the Minister of Finance compared to the one in the United States.

Let me put it this way. A unit of energy harvested from the existing system through energy retrofit, or demand side management, is indistinguishable from a unit of energy produced at a generating station, except for four important facts: one, it is available at about one-third the cost; two, it creates between three and seven times the number of person years of jobs; three, it is available and online immediately instead of the time it takes to build another generating station, et cetera; and four, it is environmentally friendly and does not create any greenhouse gas emissions. Those four elements make demand side management a far more common sense proposal than the supply side management of building new

generating stations in an energy star province like the province of Ontario.

From a stimulus point of view there is no more single important thing we could do because we would get the immediate stimulation of the energy retrofit of the home, which would be the renovation money spent, but also in time, after that renovation was paid for, the energy savings would mean more disposable income in the pocket of the homeowner. There would be a second wave of stimulation 18 months to two or two and a half years down the road. Those homeowners could save up to 40% of their energy costs and they would have a couple hundred bucks more in their pockets. They would surely go out and spend that money in the local economy.

• (1755)

This is an idea that we proposed to the Minister of Finance when he did his consultations with the parties. There is some contradiction here. I certainly submitted it to the representatives of the NDP to present to the Minister of Finance. If that did not happen, I will take the minister's word for it. However, let me suggest that the \$10,000 maximum renovation deduction available in the proposal contemplated in the budget would yield a \$1,350 rebate. I know it would be welcomed by some, but I do not believe that is enough of an incentive to make people do an energy retrofit to their home that they were not otherwise contemplating doing already. It means one has to have \$10,000 to spend before one gets any rebate.

The proposal that we put forward was a revolving fund where there would be no upfront costs to the homeowner or the taxpayer. The energy retrofit would be paid for out of this revolving fund and then homeowners would pay that fund back through the energy savings until such time as the renovation was paid for and then they would get to keep the energy savings from that day on.

That is the kind of proposal that most homeowners would avail themselves of and that is the type of proposal that is going on in the United States. It is a revolving fund concept where Barack Obama and his administration intend to renovate 2 million homes within the parameters of this one program. That is transformative. That generates new technology and manufacturing in energy efficient innovation technology. We believe that is a lost opportunity because part of the message of hope and inspiration that we are hearing from the United States is this idea that we have to wean ourselves off the way we use energy today and that the future lies in a sustainable green economy.

The two things almost complement each other. There are two things we need to do. We need to stimulate the economy and we need to save the planet from global warming and harmful greenhouse gas emissions. The very work that needs to be done to save the planet is, in fact, the work that will shepherd us through these difficult economic times. There is a lot of work that needs to be done and now is the time to do it. If there was ever a justification for going into deficit again, it would be to do the work necessary to lead us into a sustainable economy and a new green environment.

*The Budget*

Those are the kinds of transformational messages we are hearing south of the border. Here, it is frankly a void. It is almost the polar opposite, as if in this country we are somehow devoid of ideas of how to stimulate the economy with progressive action that will create meaningful jobs.

The books we are reading on this subject about the new blue-green alliance, the green collar economy, make the point that there is work for everyone in this new economy. The carbon-based economy left too many people behind. There were no roles to play for too many unskilled people. We argue that the work that needs to be done to save the planet offers work for everyone, from the unskilled labourers to the tradespeople, the installation people, and the people who design and manufacture the new technology. The advantage is that Canada could be at the forefront. We could show the world. We would be a centre of excellence for how to survive in a relatively harsh northern climate using less energy and using it smarter and better. Those are the messages of hope and inspiration that we were hoping to see and that were noticeably absent during the budget debate throughout this whole period of time.

I said that I would only deal with two of the shortcomings of this budget in what little time I had. I think it is important to address some of the other issues, one of which I dealt with a group over the lunch period just today. One of the public service unions, PIPSC, came to me to make a representation on behalf of their members.

• (1800)

I suspect it is appalled really at why the government would use this economic crisis as an opportunity to advance some of its own political ideology as it pertains to pay equity, to the civil service and the compensation of the civil service. It is confusing to many of us when the November fiscal update was introduced how freezing the wages of civil servants is going to stimulate the economy. That was a big of a mystery to all of us and I think one of the key things that threw the opposition parties into each other's arms to form a coalition.

As well, we are confused as to how balking on pay equity and removing the right of women to challenge pay equity, and making it a bargaining issue instead would somehow stimulate the economy. These things read like a neo-conservative wish list. Instead of legitimate economic measures to stimulate the economy, we had a wish list of outdated Conservative ideology, I might add, that was being foisted on Canadians.

It makes me wonder if the reluctance of the Conservatives to invite President Obama to address both houses of Parliament might be—

• (1805)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. We have to move on to questions and comments. The hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my friend from the NDP. I ask him though at this time to sort of search his soul and have him tell me if it is not true that the budget that we are assessing this evening has more of a Galbraith-Roosevelt feel to it than a Friedman-Flanagan feeling to it. And whether in fact he thinks that it was at all conceivable that a year ago the government would ever

come up with such a budget, would ever say yes to the inevitable stimulus funding that is in the budget, had it not been for the threat of failure and the final opening of its eyes to the good small liberal ways of budgeting that have served this country so well?

Is it not the combined opposition, and in particular the articulateness of the Liberal side, that brought the little leprechaun who poses as our Minister of Finance to see his pot of gold.

I am Irish. That cannot be an insult. Does he not see that this—

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I think that allusion caused a little bit of disorder in the House and the hon. member might want to withdraw it. I do not know what some cultures think about leprechauns, but I do not know if it is an appropriate way to describe a member.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the leprechauns that I have known are perhaps much more jolly than the minister and the comparison was not fair.

In short, will the hon. member—

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I think we will move on to another question, unless the hon. member is willing to withdraw the remarks.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remarks. The comparison was unfair.

**The Deputy Speaker:** If the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre wishes to respond, he may.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes it must be difficult to be Liberal members because I do not know if there is any road map or guide book that they are given when they join the Liberal Party. How do they keep track of who they are and what they stand for when it gets turned upside down all the time, inside out and backwards. It is like nailing Jell-O to a wall, in trying to grasp what they really stand for. Here they rail against the budget and now they are going to stand up and vote for it.

The member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, whom I have great respect for, is far too good an MP to really believe some of the speaking notes he was given here to read when he walked in. As a former municipal politician, he would know that the way that the Conservatives crafted this particular budget makes it virtually impossible for a lot of municipalities to avail themselves of the spending. First, it was disingenuous when the government said it would be a 2% of GDP stimulus because that 2% contemplated the share of the province and the share of the municipality in the spending, so really it is like one-third of that in total stimulus.

Second, the mayor of Winnipeg has now said that he would have to borrow money or raise taxes to have the municipality avail itself of this stimulus. Frankly, it is not that easy to go out there and borrow billions of dollars on the open market, even if one has a good credit rating these days. The way it is structured and the strings that are attached to it in itself warrants voting against it. I think the coalition that we had contemplated could have put together a better package. There is a song that goes: *Anything you can do I can do better.* We could have done better.

*The Budget*

•(1810)

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention from my colleague from the New Democratic Party. He spoke about cheap suits three times in his speech, so he is demonstrating, I guess, some level of expertise in the area.

The hon. member just referred to the success of the opposition parties and the coalition in forcing the government from a November economic statement that, we can all agree, not only had failed to provide any economic leadership for the country but had egregious attacks on women, trade unions and opposition parties' political financing. In fact, we have seen progress from the government. It dropped some of those egregious measures and returned to the House with this budget. We can disagree with some of its directions and steps, but there was a stimulus package.

One of the greatest achievements of the coalition was the fact that the NDP was willing to move forward with the biggest step in its economic policy in over 40 years probably and embrace what all other social democratic parties in the world have embraced; that is, modern tax policy. The NDP joined the ranks of the Labour Party in Great Britain and social democratic parties in the Scandinavian countries and actually recognized the importance of corporate tax cuts in creating a more competitive economic environment and attracting capital, creating good jobs and more productivity, and a greener economy.

I want to commend the coalition for success on not only how it changed the Conservative Party's perspective on some of these issues but on how the NDP position on corporate taxation changed. The NDP went from being globophobic socialist Luddites who did not believe in a competitive corporate tax advantage to actually embracing it and becoming proponents of corporate tax reform for growth, productivity and prosperity.

I would like to ask him, because he is quite right about the importance of consistency in public policy, will the NDP's fervour and support for corporate tax cuts continue in its next platform as we go forward into the next election?

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I like the way the member for Kings—Hants stormed the barricades to stand up to the Conservatives and really negotiate a great deal, so that the Liberals could take that home and justify voting for the budget. What did they trade their support for? A piece of paper. Well, it is a report. No, it is regular reports. Now the government of the day is going to have to table a report saying what it spent. Does not the public accounts committee already do that, or the government operations committee, or the finance committee? I mean they traded their support for nothing. They were so afraid of being thrown into an election that they let their constituents down by supporting a budget that is clearly inadequate to meet the needs of the country and to stimulate the economy.

The member for Kings—Hants, again, is too good an MP to really believe some of the things that he says here because he himself is the one who must be wrestling with the monumental hypocrisy that he has been asked to perpetuate in about 15 minutes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I think there is enough time for a brief question or comment. The hon. member for Burlington.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I have pages of quotes from different organizations of what they thought of the economic plan. There is one here in particular I want to read. Manitoba's NDP finance minister said, "The federal budget is good for the province and will stimulate the slowing economy. The budget had something in it for everyone from consumers to businesses". Let me read one more. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry. I will have to cut off the hon. member for Burlington. It is almost 6:15 p.m. I will give the floor back to the member for Winnipeg Centre to allow him to respond.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, no self-respecting members of Parliament from my home province of Manitoba should vote for this budget. They should all vote against this budget because we have as many quotes opposing this budget as the member may have thrown together in support of it. It is a bad budget for Canadians. We could have done better. The Liberals traded their cow for three beans.

•(1815)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I will stop the hon. member there.

It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of ways and means Motion No.1.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the motion, as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion, as amended?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

•(1840)

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

*(Division No. 3)*

YEAS

Members

Abbott  
Aglukkaq  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Bains

Ablonczy  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Anders  
Arthur  
Bagnell  
Baird

Bélanger  
 Benoit  
 Bevilacqua  
 Blackburn  
 Block  
 Boughen  
 Breitreuz  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Cadman  
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 Dhaliwal  
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 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
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 Eyking  
 Finley  
 Fletcher  
 Galipeau  
 Garneau  
 Goldring  
 Goodyear  
 Grewal  
 Guergis  
 Harper  
 Hawn  
 Hill  
 Hoepfner  
 Holland  
 Jean  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
 Karygiannis  
 Kennedy  
 Kent  
 Komarnicki  
 Lake  
 Lebel  
 Lee  
 Lobb  
 Lunn  
 MacAulay  
 MacKenzie  
 Mark  
 Mayes  
 McColeman  
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
 McTeague  
 Menzies  
 Miller  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
 Murray  
 Nicholson  
 O'Connor  
 Obhrai  
 Oliphant  
 Paradis  
 Payne  
 Petit  
 Prentice  
 Proulx  
 Raitt  
 Ratansi  
 Regan  
 Richards  
 Rickford  
 Rodriguez  
 Savage  
 Scarpaleggia  
 Sgro  
 Shipley  
 Silva  
 Sorenson

Bennett  
 Bernier  
 Bezan  
 Blaney  
 Boucher  
 Braid  
 Brison  
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
 Bruinooge  
 Calandra  
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
 Cannon (Pontiac)  
 Casson  
 Clarke  
 Coderre  
 Crombie  
 Cuzner  
 Davidson  
 Dechert  
 Devolin  
 Dhalla  
 Dosanjh  
 Dryden  
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
 Easter  
 Fast  
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 Gallant  
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 Lemieux  
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 MacKay (Central Nova)  
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 McCallum  
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 McLeod  
 Mendes  
 Merrifield  
 Minna  
 Murphy (Charlottetown)  
 Neville  
 Norlock  
 O'Neill-Gordon  
 Oda  
 Pacetti  
 Patry  
 Pearson  
 Poilievre  
 Preston  
 Rae  
 Rajotte  
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*The Budget*

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 Young

## NAYS

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Allen (Welland)  
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 Ashton  
 Atamanenko  
 Beaudin  
 Bevington  
 Black  
 Bonsant  
 Bourgeois  
 Byrne  
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 Chow  
 Coady  
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 Faillie  
 Freeman  
 Gaudet  
 Gravelle  
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 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)  
 Harris (St. John's East)  
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 Lavallée  
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 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
 Foote  
 Gagnon  
 Godin  
 Guay  
 Hughes  
 Julian  
 Laframboise  
 Layton  
 Leslie  
 Lévesque  
 Maloway  
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 Masse  
 Ménard (Hochelaga)  
 Mourani  
 Nadeau  
 Paillé  
 Plamondon  
 Rafferty  
 Russell  
 Siksay  
 St-Cyr  
 Thi Lac  
 Vincent

## PAIRED

## Members

Lalonde  
 Smith — 2

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

## THE BUDGET

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in response to a question I put to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) replied.

My question was as follows:

—the Minister of Finance has no more credibility when he claims to want to respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. The proof is in his latest budget. He is going to invite private contractors directly to build recreational facilities in municipalities.

How can the Minister of Finance still claim to respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces when, with this measure, he will not only be going over Quebec's head, but over the heads of the municipalities? So much for respecting jurisdictions.

On page 146 in the English text, the economic action plan talks about recreational infrastructure in Canada.

Budget 2009 provides \$500 million over two years—

Thus, if we take Quebec's percentage of 22%, that would mean about \$110 million for Quebec.

—to support construction of new community recreational facilities and upgrades to existing facilities across Canada. Eligible facilities include recreational facilities owned by municipalities, First Nations, counties,—

These are called RCMs in Quebec.

—community organizations and other not-for-profit entities.

These are facilities that belong to municipalities, first nations, counties, and not-for-profit entities.

The initiative will support...50 per cent of the total cost of eligible projects, with the balance to be provided by provincial and municipal governments, community organizations, and the private sector.

This is the first mention of the private sector under the infrastructure heading; it is not mentioned in the previous paragraph, which discusses the owners of these facilities. The private sector is mentioned in the part of the paragraph that states that the other 50% will have to be paid for by provincial and municipal governments, community organizations and the private sector.

The section of the budget on Recreational Infrastructure Canada reads, in part, “—recreational facilities...including hockey arenas, soccer fields, tennis and basketball courts, and swimming pools. Many of these facilities were built in 1967...and are now in need of upgrading and renewal”.

Basically, what the government is saying on page 146 is that the private sector can now cover 50% of the cost, and that is the subject of my question for the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec). How can the government allow the private sector to pay half of the cost and go over the heads of municipalities, RCMs and local authorities, which are, once again, responsible for managing most of these community recreational facilities?

Why does the government think that it is okay to deal directly with the private sector rather than the municipalities, county corporations or RCMs in Quebec? Why is the government going over the heads of local government?

That was the point of my question, but the minister answered that the government would respect its partners. In the budget, however, the government is taking on a new partner, the private sector, which will have the opportunity to pay half the cost of a facility that belongs to a not-for-profit entity, a municipality or an RCM, which means that these facilities could be paid for by the private sector.

• (1850)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond in greater detail to the question raised recently by the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

First of all, I would remind the member that our government has always made it a duty to defend what it considers the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces. In partnership with the provinces, territories and municipalities, as well as first nations and the private sector, our government has established a number of joint infrastructure programs.

One of the federal government's main priorities is to improve the quality of life of Canadians. We are working to make Canada a world leader in community development. Thus, the measures recently announced by the Minister of Finance should be seen as a historic effort to upgrade our bridges, roads, tunnels and aqueducts and to improve the quality of life in Quebec communities and across the country.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that these new infrastructure measures have been warmly welcomed by Quebec government representatives, and by the mayors of major cities such as Montreal, Laval and Sherbrooke.

The government has come up with an action plan to stimulate the economy, protect Canadians and invest in our long-term growth. We have expanded and stepped up our infrastructure investments by adding nearly \$12 billion in economic recovery measures.

Over the next two years, our government will invest \$4 billion in an infrastructure stimulus fund to carry out projects with our provincial, territorial and municipal partners, \$2 billion to accelerate construction at colleges and universities, \$1 billion to create a new, green infrastructure fund, \$500 million to support the construction of new community recreational facilities and modernize existing facilities, and \$2 billion in low-cost loans to municipalities to invest in sewers, water lines and other renewal projects.

The Canadian people gave us a stronger mandate in the most recent election because of the economic crisis. Canadians expressed confidence in the Conservatives' ability to manage the crisis, and that is exactly what we are doing. All last week, I invited my Bloc Québécois colleagues to demonstrate cooperation and solidarity, values Quebecers hold dear, in order to implement Canada's economic action plan as quickly as possible. But unfortunately, the Bloc voted against the plan this evening.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, I see that the parliamentary secretary is doing a good job of reading his text. However, the question was quite simple. I repeat, why allow private companies to pay—and this is in the budget—50% of the cost of recreational infrastructure? He did not give us a complete list of all the infrastructure eligible under the program. I would like him to answer the question. I doubt that the mayor of Montreal, or the mayor of Quebec City, or the mayors of towns in his riding will be happy to learn that he will be able to deal directly with private businesses for sports and leisure facilities, bypassing the municipality.

My question is simple. Given that the text is clear, that the facilities belong to the municipalities, First Nations, counties, community organizations, other non-profits—it does not say that the facilities belong to private businesses—why allow the private sector to bypass the municipalities?

• (1855)

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, as we have just seen yet again, we cannot count on the Bloc to keep its word to help Quebecers and Canadians. As usual, the Bloc has chosen to play partisan games rather than seize the opportunity to make a real

#### *Adjournment Proceedings*

difference. Once again, Bloc members will have to go back to their ridings empty-handed and explain why they voted against billions of dollars to stimulate construction of bridges, roads and water systems, against billions of dollars to protect workers, and against billions of dollars to revitalize various sectors of our economy.

At the same time, the Bloc also voted against tax cuts, against artists, against agricultural producers, against fixing up arenas, against increasing the child tax benefit, against social housing for seniors, and more. That is what the Bloc means by “present for Quebec”.

If the member really wanted to support the people in his riding, he would have stood up to the Bloc—

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:57 p.m.)

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