



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 144 • NUMBER 012 • 2nd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 10, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 10, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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*Prayers*

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• (1005)  
[English]

## POINTS OF ORDER

### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, upon reading the blues yesterday, I realized I may have used some unparliamentary language in my point of order addressing an answer I received from the hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development during question period last week.

I would like to retract the language that may have come into question. However, it must be noted that the minister still quoted Mr. Matas out of context and he failed to address the seriousness of my question in the House.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre for her withdrawal because I think some of the remarks she made were perhaps unnecessary on the point of order. However, having heard the argument, I believe this is not a matter of order in the House but rather a question of debate that I am sure will be debated in due course over time. The member, as she knows, can raise the matter in the late show and have discussions then that might resolve the issue of the minister's quotes.

However, I do not believe it is for the Chair to intervene on the intent or purpose of these quotations or the meaning to be attributed to the words that were used, which the hon. member's point of order invites me to do. I am going to decline and leave the matter at that.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to supplementary estimates B for the year 2008-09.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I am pleased to report that the committee has considered the supplementary estimates B under justice for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, and reports the same.

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### ITALIAN-CANADIAN RECOGNITION AND RESTITUTION ACT

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-302, An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their “enemy alien” designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a bill to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their “enemy alien” designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history. The history is too long to explain and get into details at this time but that will be done at second reading.

However, during the Second World War, immigrants and Canadians of Italian origin were incarcerated and designated as enemy aliens. I tabled the same bill in 2005 prior to the Liberal government signing a deal with the Italian community to create the well-known ACE program, which would have righted these wrongs, but, in typical fashion, the Conservative government denied the existence of the program and decided not to honour the signed deals.

I re-tabled the bill in 2007. This bill is not unique or unprecedented in comparison to deals made with other cultural communities. Why do we not do the right thing and apologize to the Italian community for past injustices? Why does the government favour one community over another and pit Canadians against each other?

*Routine Proceedings*

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-303, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (travel expenses).

He said: Mr. Speaker, when Canadians are considering vacation destinations, how many of them think of Canadian destinations first? That is why I am proud to introduce a bill today that amends the Income Tax Act to make things easier for Canadians and encourage them to choose Canadian destinations.

Under this amendment, taxpayers will be entitled to deduct up to \$2,000 from their income in respect of the expense of purchasing airplane, train or bus tickets for the taxpayer or the taxpayer's family members if the travel involves crossing at least three different provincial boundaries.

[*English*]

Promoting travel within Canada is a way to promote Canada's rich cultural diversity. If all Canadians had an easier opportunity to visit distant provinces, it would not only foster a stronger knowledge of our shared history, but would also promote a sense of unity and understanding among Canadians who otherwise seldom interact.

According to my calculations, with the additional money spent during these trips, the economic stimulus in this private member's bill would be revenue neutral for the finance department.

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

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**SECURE, ADEQUATE, ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Halifax for seconding the bill.

The bill would ensure adequate, accessible and affordable housing. There is no question that there is a housing crisis in this country. We know that at least three million Canadian households live in housing insecurity and that homelessness is a terrible crisis in many communities.

It is important that the federal government accept its responsibility for housing and work with the provinces, local communities and aboriginal representatives to ensure we deal with the housing problem.

The bill puts forward a strong plan to ensure that secure, adequate, affordable and accessible housing is there, that coop housing is developed, that housing for aboriginal people is developed and that housing is developed for people who are homeless. The bill calls on the federal government to work in a cooperative way with other

partners to develop such a strategy and a program. We believe this is critical.

I hope all members of the House will consider the bill and support it because we need to ensure that we do not have a homelessness crisis and a housing crisis in a country as wealthy as Canada.

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

\* \* \*

• (1010)

**BILLS OF EXCHANGE ACT**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-305, An Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act (rights of bill holders).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today would protect consumers from lawsuits when cheque cashing businesses cash cancelled cheques. Under the current laws, which date back to the 1890s, businesses, such as Money Mart, can successfully sue the issuer of a cheque cashed by a third party even when a stop payment order has been issued.

I have had numerous examples brought to my attention of consumers who have been ripped off by an unsavoury business even when they tried to put a stop payment on a cheque or when problems developed. I am hoping the bill will have broad support from MPs because this is happening in every community because of a very archaic law.

The bill before us would put the onus on businesses to ensure that the cheques they cash have not had a stop payment put on them. It is a consumer protection bill that would save people much grief from dealing with financial organizations that operate in a way that rips off consumers.

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CANADIAN PRODUCTS PROMOTION ACT**

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-306, An Act respecting the use of government contracts to promote economic development.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has a long history of innovation. We have been working on this bill for some time. Given the current economic situation, it is more important than ever that this bill be debated and passed in this House.

The purpose of this bill is to promote economic development in Canada and Quebec by ensuring that, in the procurement of its goods and services, the Government of Canada gives preference to Canadian products while complying with its international obligations, including NAFTA.

This bill also states that the price of a Canadian product may not exceed by more than 7.5% the price of a non-Canadian similar product. It also states that, to ensure fair treatment of all provinces, the Government of Canada shall not, in a fiscal year, obtain more than 50% of the value of its products from a single province.

I hope that the members will give this bill special consideration and that it will help the economy, which must overcome some serious challenges. I hope that my colleagues will vote in favour of this bill.

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

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#### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-307, An Act to amend the Official Languages Act (Charter of the French Language) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord for seconding this bill titled An Act to amend the Official Languages Act (Charter of the French Language) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

This bill would amend the Official Languages Act so that the federal government, the federal administration and federal institutions recognize French as the official language of Quebec and as the common language spoken by Quebecers.

This bill would also amend the Canada Labour Code to ensure that employees who work in businesses under federal jurisdiction are given the same guarantees and advantages as other Quebec workers, who are subject to the Charter of the French Language.

Finally, this bill would amend the Canada Business Corporations Act to ensure that company names also respect the Charter of the French Language.

I feel that this bill should receive the unanimous support of this House because it is quite simply the concrete expression of the motion adopted here, by the House, recognizing the Quebec nation. It is just a formality, and I am convinced that we will have the unanimous consent of the House to pass this bill quickly.

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

\* \* \*

• (1015)

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-308, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my hon. colleague from Saint-Lambert for seconding this bill.

This bill is without a doubt extremely important for unemployed workers, since it improves the employment insurance system. The priority remains improving access to the system, since over 55% of unemployed workers are excluded from it at this time. We would therefore like to reduce the qualifying period to a minimum of 360 hours of work.

#### Routine Proceedings

We would also like to increase the benefit period, which is currently 45 weeks. The budget increases that period by five weeks, but we would like that increase to 50 weeks to become permanent. The bill also increases the rate of weekly benefits to 60% of a claimant's revenue.

In addition, we hope to eliminate the distinctions between a new entrant and a re-entrant to the labour force. Those distinctions are completely discriminatory. We must also eliminate the presumption that persons related to each other do not deal with each other at arm's length, and increase the maximum yearly insurable earnings to \$42,500.

The bill also adds a new part to the act relating to self-employed persons, including them in the employment insurance system.

As I said, it is an extremely important bill. All parties in this House have agreed that access to the employment insurance system and the benefits themselves must be improved. Our bill aims to do just that. I encourage all members to support it.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF CANADA FOR THE REGION OF NORTHERN ONTARIO ACT

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-309, An Act to establish the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Region of Northern Ontario.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie for his support.

I am pleased to present my private member's bill, which looks to establish the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the region of northern Ontario. The purpose of this bill is to promote economic development, economic diversification and job creation in communities in northern Ontario.

In light of what has gone on in the last budget, we see a differentiation between agencies and programs. It should be equal. There should not be one area having a superior status over another.

Regional development is crucial to the people of northern Ontario and my bill is designed to ensure that FedNor will not be subject to any more cuts or face the threat of elimination altogether by the current Conservative government.

I look forward to the successful passing of this proposed legislation.

*Routine Proceedings*

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

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• (1020)

**AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-310, An Act to Provide Certain Rights to Air Passengers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a private member's bill that would provide compensation to air passengers and a bill of rights protecting travellers in Canada.

The bill includes measures on compensation for overbooked flights, unreasonable tarmac delays, cancelled or delayed flights, the concern for late and misplaced luggage, and all-inclusive pricing by airline companies in their advertising.

The legislation is inspired by a European Union law, where overbookings have dropped significantly. Air Canada is already operating under the European laws in their flights to Europe. Why should an Air Canada customer receive better treatment in Europe than in Canada?

The bill of rights would ensure that passengers are kept informed of flight changes, whether they are delays or cancellations. The new rules would be posted in the airport and airlines would have to inform passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation.

The changes are not meant to punish the airlines. If the airlines were to follow the rules, they would not have to pay \$1 in compensation to travellers.

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

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**CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I feel honoured to reintroduce the climate change accountability act. This act would ensure that Canada would assume its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change. It received the gracious support of a majority of members in the House this last Parliament, and I look forward to working with my colleagues from all parties to make sure that this vital legislation gets passed as quickly as possible.

Recent developments make it even more urgent that we take immediate steps to deal with greenhouse gas emissions. This act would set firm targets to reduce Canadian emissions. It would set clear objectives that would have to be met on fixed dates. It would help safeguard future generations from the dangerous effects of climate change and it would make us credible again in the eyes of the world.

We must not delay action any longer.

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

**MADE IN CANADA ACT**

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-312, An Act respecting the use of government procurements and transfers to promote economic development.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am privileged today to introduce the made in Canada act.

This act respecting the use of government procurements and transfers to promote economic development would stimulate employment and Canadian industry. It would do this by ensuring that our government maintains a minimum level of Canadian content in the procurement of our products and in federally supported infrastructure projects.

A discussion of this must be started if we are to get serious about stimulating our economy and not just stimulating jobs and industries overseas. Our major trading partners, like Europe, Mexico and the U.S.A., have had such policies in place for decades.

This act is intended to catch up and get the best value from hard-earned Canadian taxpayers' dollars.

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

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• (1025)

**PETITIONS****HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to receive numerous petitions from all across Canada, from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Ontario, imploring the government to continue its good work in stopping the trafficking of young children. More and more police agencies, the RCMP and police organizations are being included in these petitions as well as ordinary citizens and especially non-government organizations such as churches, the Salvation Army and people like that. Many advisory councils from schools are also sending in petitions now, so I would like to present these to the House.

[*Translation*]

**INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of once again presenting a petition signed by the residents of the national capital region concerning heavy truck traffic in the downtown, the very heart of the nation's capital.

These petitioners are worried that the construction of a new bridge will not eliminate this truck traffic. The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to direct the National Capital Commission to proceed with an in-depth study of a bridge between the Canotek industrial park and the Gatineau airport, which is option number 7 of the first phase of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment and a position that is now also supported by the governments of Ontario and Quebec.

*Government Orders*

[English]

## TRANSPORTATION OF ANIMALS

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this petition is primarily from residents of the greater Toronto area but also from the province of Alberta. It has to do with the health and safety of the transportation of animals. It says that the undersigned citizens of Canada petition the House of Commons to amend the animal transport regulations under Canada's Health of Animals Act to be consistent with the findings of the EU scientific committee on animal health and welfare, to reduce transport time for pigs, poultry, horses, calves and lambs to 8 hours, and 12 hours for cattle, sheep, goats, and ensure adequate enforcement of the regulations. The petitioners ask that the amendments be passed quickly.

## ASBESTOS

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians who call upon Parliament to recognize that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known. Yet, Canada remains one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world.

Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use. Therefore, the petitions call upon Parliament to ban asbestos in all of its forms and to end all government subsidies of the asbestos industry, both in Canada and abroad, and to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos such as the Rotterdam convention.

## INCOME TRUSTS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the clerk, I am pleased to present a petition which has about 7,000 signatures submitted so far on the subject matter of income trusts. This petition comes from residents in the areas of Park Royal, Clarkson, Port Credit and Lakeview.

The petitioners continue to be concerned about the problem that occurred in 2006. They recall that the Prime Minister said that there is no greater fraud than a promise not kept. He emphatically promised during the election in 2006 that he would not tax income trusts. The petitioners point out that he did break that promise and imposed a 31.5% punitive tax on income trusts.

The independent experts also point out that the finance committee has shown that the finance minister's decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions, and I remember because I participated in those hearings. The petitioners therefore ask the Government of Canada to admit that the methodology was flawed and apologize to the holders of income trusts, and to repeal the 31.5% tax on income trusts.

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## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1030)

[Translation]

## BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

The House resumed from February 9, 2009 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and related fiscal measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee and of the motion that this question be now put.

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this bill. Because this is the first time I have made a speech since the election, I would like to greet my constituents, who, for the sixth time, gave me a mandate in this House with a wonderful majority. I cannot thank them enough. They can be proud of the job I will do, and I will work very hard for them.

We all know that an economic crisis like the one we are going through affects not only companies and municipalities, but all the men and women in Quebec and Canada. We asked that the budget include exceptional measures that we considered imperative and that all Quebecers wanted. Instead, the government cut these measures.

The government cut \$1 billion from our equalization transfer payments. Imagine how that will affect job creation, assistance for businesses and families and help for our day care system in Quebec. All that money from equalization transfers would have helped carry on all the wonderful work that has begun in Quebec.

But that money has been cut this year, and it will be cut in the years to come. The government is going to do everything it can to chip away at Quebec, in any event. Quebec will always be penalized, and that is unacceptable. The National Assembly had reached a consensus on this. The government has written Quebec off. I cannot wait to see how the Conservative members from Quebec are going to react during the next election campaign and how the Liberal members from Quebec are going to boast about this budget they voted for.

The securities commission is also a priority for the Bloc Québécois. There again, there is a consensus in Quebec. The government wants to create a pan-Canadian securities commission. Once again, they want to duplicate the work that we have already done. We do not need it in Quebec. We already have a solid structure in place; we have our own commission. Henceforth, we will be dealing with a commission to be headquartered where? Probably in Toronto; certainly not in Quebec. That is another budget item.

These are the two main reasons why we will vote against the budget implementation bill. But that is not all. There are a number of other factors at issue that are of grave concern to me as a woman.

*Government Orders*

There is the matter of pay equity. My colleagues in this House and I are not the only ones to have fought for it. There are so many groups of women who fought for pay equity. My mother fought so that one day we would have equal pay for equal work. That is not too much to ask. And now we will be unable to appeal to the courts; we will be prevented from having the same salary. In this House, as my colleague said yesterday, men and women receive equal pay. But that is not the case elsewhere. I have been in that situation several times. I have seen cases in my riding. You just cannot imagine. Women come to me to ask what recourse they have. They do the same work as a man but are not entitled to the same wages. Sometimes they have to work even harder.

This is an injustice that should no longer exist and one that the Conservative Party, once again, did not pay any attention to. It is unacceptable to take us back in time, unacceptable for women. With such a position, there will be fewer and fewer women in all spheres of elected activity—I mean municipal government, boards of directors, and at the provincial, even the federal level. Fewer and fewer women will want to get involved, because women are not recognized as equal to men. The battles will begin again, the same ones as 40 or 50 years ago, because our government is moving us back in time instead of ahead.

• (1035)

I can tell hon. members that my recent discussions with some women were in that vein. They were not interested in getting involved, because they would never achieve pay equity. This is an aberrant situation and one we will challenge.

There are some that say that people in the arts are living high off the hog. That is wrong, totally wrong. There is plenty of artistic activity in my riding. There are plenty of musicians and painters, and they do not have an easy time of it. They are really just living on the poverty line. What is more, they have just had funding taken away from them. These people travelled abroad often and I myself have travelled to Japan with a delegation of artists. I did this at my own expense in order to give them a chance to gain recognition and meet with Japanese artists. Now they will not be able to do this any more. Foreign artists will be encouraged to come here but our artists will not be encouraged to travel elsewhere. This is another aberrant situation. Are we going to just close up like an oyster?

There is another point I want to make. This Conservative government is taking a piecemeal approach. It has no vision for the future. There is a budget for two years but the measures it contains will not be renewable. I will not even address the Kyoto protocol. We can see that there is nothing in the budget to encourage sustainable development or the measures already in place.

In my riding, CEVEQ has been conducting studies on electric automobiles for 10 years, which is fantastic. They are studying vehicles from California and electric buses, things that we could eventually use here. The government is showing no willingness to make the environment a priority in this House.

I look at youth today—my daughter is studying architecture and the environment and is looking at the current potential to build green buildings and homes. We have extraordinary possibilities ahead of us, but the government is not doing anything to actually implement them.

Geothermal must also be studied. I was not very familiar with it, but my daughter explained to me exactly what it is. It is the future and so we must seriously consider it. It does not pollute. There are a number of products that do not pollute, such as solar and wind energy. Why are we not investing in these areas instead of, once again, investing in oil companies?

I was reading an article this morning in which the Conservatives said that Bombardier did not need the government's help. Ottawa is saying that Bombardier does not need the government's help. It is unbelievable. They just laid off 1,300 people. Bell Helicopter laid off 600. And yet we are being told that these businesses do not need help. We have to take a serious look at reality and react accordingly. The government has a role to play and it must do so immediately.

To conclude, we are against the implementation of this bill.

• (1040)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, now that we know the Liberals will support the budget, I would like my hon. Bloc Québécois colleague to explain how the women of the Liberal caucus manage to sleep at night, given that this bill is detrimental to women, that is, to Quebec women and Canadian women alike.

**Ms. Monique Guay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for his question. I do not know how they manage to sleep, but they must not be sleeping very well, given the little respect women receive here. They will vote in favour of the bill. The Liberals will vote, with the Conservatives, in favour of the coalition. They formed a coalition and will vote for the bill. So, they have little respect for women.

That is my opinion, it is the opinion of all women and it is the opinion of all the men who will oppose this bill, those of the Bloc and the NDP.

It is both inconceivable and unacceptable to us to lose our rights this way. I will never stop fighting, my life long, so that my children, my daughter, her children, her daughters have the same rights and opportunities as men, one day.

The right to court challenges is vital for women, and it was taken from them. I will never forget that. We will work accordingly to eventually recover that right, which is essential for women facing problems of pay equity.

[*English*]

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton.

I stand to speak to this budget bill with some reluctance. I have many concerns that this budget may have come too late and may be too inadequate to deal with a rapidly worsening economic recession.



*Government Orders*

However, there are some positive elements in this budget, such as the infrastructure programs, the child tax benefit increase, funding for universities, housing for seniors and aboriginal people, and the availability of credit for troubled businesses and for some people who may need to look at home ownership or mortgages, and an investment increase in regional development issues. Those elements, which are Liberal elements, prompt me to swallow hard and hope for positive results.

At the same time, I am concerned. I am concerned about pay equity and the bill that would take away access to justice for those people who seek pay equity. I am concerned about promises to provinces on equalization that have been broken. I am concerned about inadequate changes to employment insurance that would not address the escalating job losses. I am concerned about the lack of a national housing strategy when we know that in every municipality in this country there is a huge housing deficit.

I am concerned that this is a lost opportunity to invest in green investments, in new technologies that would bring about green investments. I am also concerned that there is insufficient money for research and development. In fact, there is a cut to the major granting organizations for R and D in this country.

This is not a time to tip Canada's already precarious balance, and it would be irresponsible for us to play politics and call an election now. Therefore, as I said, I am speaking to this budget with reluctance.

I will discuss some of the things that concern me about this budget. This is why we put the Conservative government on notice and on probation. There are many elements in this budget that we are concerned about simply because they were elements in past budgets which never materialized. In other words, promises were made and there was never any money for implementation and none of the things actually occurred. There is also some smoke and mirrors, which is repetition of old programs that have been rejigged so that they sound like new programs but they have not changed at all.

That is why we are going to keep tabs. That is why we are saying that come March, come June and come December, we will not only look at accountability from the government but we will look at outcomes and results. Did the government achieve what it said it was going to achieve? Was this a good enough stimulus package? Did that money flow? Were the investments actually made?

I will give an example to show why I am concerned. There was an announcement in past budgets of \$33 billion in infrastructure over seven years. In year one the money never materialized. In year two we only saw \$80 million of that money materialize, and 78% of those infrastructure projects were in Conservative-held ridings.

The question is, do we trust the government not to play patronage games, not to pork-barrel in some of the ridings? Is this really helping? Are they good infrastructure projects? What happened to the \$33 billion over seven years? Has that gone? Is it being replaced now by something new? We are waiting to see whether this money will flow.

On EI, up front it looks like there is going to be more money for more people to get EI, but is it going to happen? The government promised that it would deal with maternity benefits for women who

are self-employed. Now the government says it is going to study it again. We have been studying these things for quite a while. The question is, what are the results going to be and is it adequate enough?

I come from B.C. The three major sectors that are impacted right now are the manufacturing sector, the automotive sector and the forestry sector. Most of the forestry industry in Canada has been hit hard by an American dollar that was lower than we expected, by a softwood lumber deal that left \$1 billion on the table and was completely inadequate, and by a recession in the U.S. where building is not occurring so we cannot sell our wood.

There was one other big thing that happened to make B.C. worse off than any other part of Canada with regard to forestry. That is the pine beetle which we could not stop. It is there eating away at 75% of the pine forest. In 2006, the government promised \$200 million toward the pine beetle issue, for restructuring, job retraining and new economies. In 2006, the government promised another \$200 million. We are talking about \$400 million promised over two years. One hundred million dollars of that has been seen. Where is the other \$300 million? Now we see in this budget that there is going to be \$85 million a year for two years for the whole of Canada. Is that in addition to the \$300 million that is missing?

● (1045)

These are the questions we want to ask. What is happening to that money when whole towns and communities in British Columbia are closing down? People are walking away from their homes. What is happening with the B.C. forestry industry? Are we going to do anything to help British Columbia survive? It is losing more jobs than any other province in Canada at the moment.

These are real people that we are talking about who are walking away from their homes, whose kids cannot finish college. This is a real problem.

There is trade and the gateway coming from British Columbia. We saw Mr. Chrétien and the Liberal government build relationships with China and with Asia because at the moment we do 80% of our trade with the United States. This is nice, but who does good business with only one client? We cannot put all of our eggs in one basket, however, we did. Now that our client is in a recession, and we hear the IMF saying possibly a depression, we are losing business. We are not selling. About 45% of our GDP depends upon trade. What are we doing about this?

We could have continued the relationships that Mr. Chrétien started. We could have built the gateway that Mr. Martin talked about under Liberal governments. That has not happened. Now we find that the relationship has gone backward because the Prime Minister of Canada has instead actually created negative relationships with China.

*Government Orders*

We are putting money into tourism. The biggest middle class today that is spending money as tourists are the Chinese. Canada is not a most preferred destination because China and Canada have lost a relationship that was so strong dating back to Bethune, and this Prime Minister has created a problem in the relationship.

What are we really going to do here? How are we going to make a difference?

I want to talk about arts and culture. This is an industry that brings \$84.6 billion into the gross domestic product. This is an industry that creates 1.1 million jobs. This is an industry with \$5 billion worth in trading and cultural products. Instead, we see smoke and mirrors again.

The minister did put in new money. The minister put in money for cultural spaces, which is a one-time boost of \$30 million a year. We see him put \$25 million into awards, which is a new program, and we see him put new money into festivals, but that is not all that arts and culture is about.

We see him repeat the things that are already there. He called them something new but it is not new money. It is the same thing reiterated in this budget, for instance, \$100 million to the Canadian Television Fund. That has been there forever. There is \$15 million for magazine publishing. That is what we have been putting into that every year for the past 10 years. There is \$15 million for the Canada music fund. That has always been there.

We are wondering about the smoke and mirrors. We are wondering whether the government will do something about the cancelling of the trade routes program because for every dollar lost in those programs, \$5 is lost to the GDP in Canada, and thousands of jobs have been lost.

Let us talk about some of the things that will cause an economic stimulus.

Finally, there are jobs, jobs, jobs. This is the saddest cut of all.

I came into politics in 1992 as a physician because I had no pill to help the people who came to see me who had just lost their jobs or their homes. There was the 55-year-old man who had no other job but the one he had worked at for 30 years and did not know what to do. He had to take his kids out of college. There was the young couple who overextended themselves to get a mortgage and now have new baby. One of them lost a job and they do not know what to do.

These are real people. We are told that there were 71,000 jobs lost in December and 129,000 jobs lost in January alone. That is a nice statistic. That is a scary statistic, but real people are hurting. It is real people who have nowhere to go.

It is at this time when government should come to the rescue of its citizens. It is when citizens have to depend upon their government to be there for them. When I came here in 1992, the government had abandoned its people. I am suggesting now that we cannot stand by and watch government abandon its people again. Those real people are somebody's kids and somebody's parents.

This is why this party is putting the government on notice. We are watching it. We are monitoring its results. We are making sure it

does what it said it was going to do. We are going to see if it makes a difference. We are going to see if instead of reacting constantly, there is a proactivity, there is a keeping track of what is happening, and there is change made so that we can help real Canadians to get back to work and to move this economy again.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech on the needs of people in an economic crisis, and I asked myself a question.

We are probably at the dawning of another election campaign. When the Liberals were in power, they plundered between \$50 billion and \$55 billion from the employment insurance fund and took money from the old age guaranteed income supplement fund. So they owe income money to seniors.

Should the Liberals be next in office, could the money from the old age guaranteed income supplement—money taken from seniors, the \$55 billion or \$56 billion taken from the unemployed over the years they were in office—be returned to these people, since they seem to be very sensitive to persons in need?

[*English*]

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer the part first and foremost about the GIS. The Liberal government put money into GIS in the last two budgets before we stopped being government.

I want to talk about employment insurance. It used to be, as we well know, unemployment insurance. We had to deal with changing it to meet the needs of people who were no longer in for six months collecting unemployment but for whom unemployment had become a way of life under the last Conservative government. We had to shift the way the program worked.

I think there is more than just putting money into employment insurance right now. We need to look at whether employment insurance as it stands today will meet the needs of a totally changing job structure, a totally changing reality in terms of job losses and in terms of new jobs. We need to be able to be progressive in terms of meeting the needs, not only of people who work in the employer-employee type of work but people who are self-employed, people who do not know what to do when they can no longer find clients.

We need to rejig the whole employment insurance system and make it work for people.

*Government Orders*

•(1055)

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening for the last couple of weeks to Liberal members standing in the House and railing against the budget. Quite frankly, I have to tell them that I am getting emails and phone calls from people in my riding saying that the Liberals and the Liberal Party in their stance are becoming a bit of a laughing stock. I would like to ask the hon. member, why does she and the other Liberal members continue to storm the barricades and ask for reports?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, I think there are certain times when political parties have to put aside partisanship and ask themselves what is in the best interest of the country and of its citizens, and I think this is such a time. It would be irresponsible at this particular time to just throw away a budget that has some very important Liberal components in it and say, “Oh, no, let us play political games”.

What we are saying is that we are buying this, but we want to see if it actually materializes into real programs, into real projects, and if that money actually flows, and if it does flow, what are the results?

Now that the government realizes that we are in a crisis, is it actually going to stop waiting for the shoe to drop before it responds? Is it going to be proactive and progressive in the way it does things?

Therefore, we are going to be keeping tabs. As a physician, I can say that outcomes are what matter. The government can do rhetoric, it can say what it wants, but at the end of the day we are looking for outcomes. If we see there are no outcomes forthcoming, if we see that the government is not keeping its word as it said it would do, then we will take steps. However, right now it would be irresponsible to do any such thing.

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to address some key points that were outlined in the budget presented by the government.

The Minister of Finance introduced a variety of initiatives that the government feels would benefit Canadians while stimulating our economy, and creating and maintaining jobs. The Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister have been telling Canadians and Parliament conflicting stories about the record of the finances of this country. Little of it was actually true.

In September the Prime Minister told Canadians it was a good time to buy stocks and he was wrong. The Prime Minister said Canada should not run a deficit and said that if we were going to have a recession, it would have happened by now. He was wrong again. The Minister of Finance further confused the matter by saying a deficit was the only way to get through these challenging times.

Then came the economic update delivered last December. In a statement by the Prime Minister, after convincing the Governor General to prorogue Parliament, he said that over the coming weeks the government would begin consultations and focus on the budget. I am very concerned about what was being done leading up to the financial update.

Since then, Canada has lost 213,000 jobs and we are into the most severe recession since the 1930s. In January alone, another 129,000 jobs have been lost and more than 71,000 of those jobs in the last

year in Ontario. Canadians reluctantly gave the Conservatives another minority government. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance were busy denying the obvious fact that the country was headed into a recession and failed to plan for imminent job losses.

It was not until the threat of losing power that the government started to take any action on the economic crisis that was right in front of their eyes. Only after pressure from the opposition and proroguing Parliament did the government actually get to work on preparing a budget and stimulus plan.

Three weeks ago the Minister of Finance delivered Canada's economic action plan designed to provide just the right amount of economic stimulus, while attempting to spark more spending by banks and Canadians. The Liberal opposition felt there was still more that could be done and, as a result, we have placed the government on probation to ensure that the necessary spending by the government will actually happen this time and not be just another series of empty promises. We will demand that the government shows us exactly what it has done in three separate intervals in March, June and again in December.

While much of the budget could be considered acceptable, the need to protect jobs was overlooked. The Liberal caucus has repeatedly stated that we need to protect the jobs of today while creating jobs for the future.

Every day we are getting more reports of job losses in every part of Canada in almost every industry. More Canadian companies are expected to lay off workers with the recession worsening. We know that reports of dismal earnings often go hand in hand with job cuts and economists are telling us that it will only get worse before it gets better.

After careful review of the budget labelled as Canada's economic action plan, we have discovered some critical omissions in the action portion of the plan. For example, the Minister of Finance is telling us that the government will invest millions of dollars in more opportunities for workers.

We were told the government will increase funding for training delivered through employment insurance and invest in strategic training. When we read the fine print, we discovered that the funding would only make its way through the system and into the hands of Canadians over two or three years and, in some cases, as long as five years.

•(1100)

In my riding, Formulated Coatings Ltd. laid off 60 workers two weeks ago when the company announced it was bankrupt. The employees did not get any severance or financial packages and were asked to leave with only 10 minutes notice.

In most cases, there is little to no notice given, other than a meeting in the employee lunch room and being told that they no longer have a job.

The Chrysler plant in my riding also announced it would suspend production and temporarily shut down for about a month to save money.

*Government Orders*

For these men and women, losing their jobs could not come at a worse time. It is difficult enough dealing with the loss of employment and the stress of trying to find work in a crumbling job market, but the budget did little to address the minimum six weeks before these workers would see any money from EI.

Based on the way the looming economic challenges were dealt with, is it fair to think that the government will take the same foot-dragging approach in delivering the EI funding and training as well as the education and retraining so desperately needed by Canadians?

Statistics Canada suggests that our unemployment rate is at 7.2%, and even if all the measures in the budget were implemented in the next few months, it will not see a return to a 6% or lower unemployment level until sometime in 2013 or 2014, 2014 being a long time to wait for workers who have mortgages and payments and families. Five years is a long time to wait for assistance from the government.

The Conservative budget proposes to create 190,000 jobs over two years when Canada has lost 213,000 jobs in the last three months alone.

This is why the Liberal Party has put the government on probation and will carefully monitor the actions of the government. The country depends on a strong plan and a government that can deliver on its promises, and we will ensure the government keeps its promises to Canadians.

Canadians need our support and assistance to weather this financial storm. They want all parliamentarians to put aside partisanship and make a principled decision on the budget.

This is the Conservatives' budget, but it is our responsibility to ensure that the job of government gets done and that Canadians are well-served.

The mismanagement of the economic crisis and failure to act has rightfully given Parliament and Canadians a reason to question the credibility of the Conservative government on economic matters.

• (1105)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton has been a member in this place for 15 years. He has outlined some important considerations for Canadians.

The budget is not perfect, but we do have to put the interests of people ahead of political interests and continue to work together. It is unfortunate that Parliament has been unable to work because of the comedy of the government's actions since last summer when the House rose.

There are a few things that are not in the budget and maybe the member would like to comment on them.

In prior budgets we talked about important things like foreign credentials recognition and the need for doctors and health care providers. This budget is silent on some of those ongoing issues.

Has the member seen in his own riding, and through his own experience, the need to continue to sustain the important opportunities we have by credentials recognition and the need for a strategy on how to deal with this?

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member. There are problems for newcomers, especially with respect to the recognition of their foreign credentials. I do not think the Conservatives mentioned much in the budget about the immigration backlog.

Our top priority is to find a way to protect the jobs of Canadians and their pensions at this time of crisis.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the lapse rate of the government on infrastructure last year was about 50%. In other words, for every dollar it promised, 50¢ went out the door. For every \$100 it promised, \$50 went out the door. For every \$1 billion it promised, \$500 million went out the door.

The hon. member's riding is in an area of the GTA that is growing quite rapidly and is in need of enormous input of infrastructure of all kinds.

Is the hon. member concerned about the discrepancy between the promise of infrastructure and the reality of the government's record?

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi:** Mr. Speaker, yes, in my riding of Bramalea—Gore—Malton, there are many new developments and definitely the infrastructure program is very important, especially with new immigrants coming from so many places, for my riding. As I mentioned earlier, our first priority, as well as the infrastructure program, are the jobs. That is why I have talked about the jobs. If we have an infrastructure program, then we have more jobs for new immigrants and people who have been laid off and have no jobs, which they need. That is the first priority.

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, the good people of Bramalea—Gore—Malton had the good sense to return the member to this place, and he is a member of the Liberal Party.

On the government's record of infrastructure money that actually gets out the door, there seems to be a bit of a diversion as it goes out that door. Seventy-five per cent of whatever money does go out, which is about 50% of what is promised, ends up in Conservative ridings.

Is the member somewhat concerned that ridings that did not vote for the government party will be shortchanged in whatever infrastructure monies might be delivered?

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, last year, with regard to citizenship and immigration, the Conservatives cut staff from the riding, staff that would have delivered, especially in the Mississauga and Toronto area.

In the same way, I notice the government is delivering money only to Conservative ridings. The government should consider other ridings, too. It should be after the partisans and it should consider other people as well. Whether they voted for the Conservatives, the government should give equal opportunities to all ridings in the country.

*Government Orders*

• (1110)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise to speak to Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, which is an important document. Canadians have been looking for leadership from the government to deal with today's economic climate and the problems we face.

It is important to point out, as I start this discussion, that the New Democrats do not support the bill for a number of different reasons, but we are doing our job. We are showing leadership on what we should have in the country. The country should have a more balanced approach with regard to a budget that not only deals with the economic crisis, but deals with some of the systemic issues the country faces with previous legislation and lack of action as well.

We have an interesting case with regard to democracy. Last year, when the Liberals consented to the Conservative budget changes, the Immigration Act was changed. We have to remember that with the passage of the budget bill last year, the immigration minister received a blank cheque to change the immigration system, without going through the normal, democratic process in the House of Commons.

The normal process is the minister introduces a bill which then goes through a reading in the House of Commons. Then it is vetted at committee and comes back to the House of Commons. If passed, it goes to the Senate and if there are changes, it comes back here. Now we have avoided that consultation process under our immigration policy, which is truly unfortunate, because there is economic opportunity. It is a social justice issue to ensure Canada does the right thing with its immigration policy. There is also an opportunity to engage the public and the private and not-for-profit sector about how our immigration policies work or do not work for our country.

By agreeing to that, the Liberals gave the government a blank cheque to change it. We have seen the effects, and it has not been an improvement in our immigration system. We have seen greater lineups, greater delays and it has reduced our capacity to respond in this global climate.

There are a couple of issues. Interestingly enough, through Bill C-10, the government is changing the Investment Canada Act. It also changing other legislation with regard to pay equity, for example, which will unfairly hurt women. Women will no longer be able to go through the court system to challenge pay equity. They will have to go through another process that will not be as fair. It takes away from the judicial system, which is the appropriate process.

It is important to note that this sends a message across the country that women's issues are secondary. It can be done on a one-off, with no problem at all, by the government. It sets the mandate for how it feels and how it goes forward to deal with serious matters.

Avoiding our legislative review process is truly unfortunate. Members of the House of Commons collectively are supposed to review bills. We are supposed to have input. We are supposed to garner the witnesses. We are supposed to go through a process to improve a bill.

Often we find common ground. Sometimes we get amendments put forth and avoid some unintended consequences. Since 2002, I do not know how many times I have been in committee reviewing a bill

and our party or the government has found errors in it, whether it was the Liberals in the past or the Conservatives currently. We go through the legislation to fix those errors. Instead we have legislation being rammed down our throats, which is unacceptable.

With respect to the budget implementation bill, it is ironic. After the G20 summit, the Prime Minister talked with other world leaders and said that he would come back with a package for Canada. Instead he set off a political crisis by cutting the provinces and a number of different services and putting in some other elements, which still cannot be explained today, for example, billions of dollars for sales of public buildings. The Conservatives cannot even name the buildings or what they will do with them. That really set up a firestorm in the politics. Hence, the government took a time out.

The Prime Minister went to the Governor General and told her the Conservatives needed a time out because everybody was upset with them. The Conservatives misled the world by saying they would do something, but did nothing. Apparently they thought nobody in Canada was paying attention to the international news, or they did not have access to the Internet or something else. Canadians quickly realized that the Prime Minister said one thing and came home and did another. However, the Conservatives had their time out. In that timeframe one would have thought they would have come back with a plan.

• (1115)

I come from the automotive sector and I have spoken many times in this House of Commons about a plan for the automotive sector. One would have thought the government would come back with proper legislation that would actually address the issues. It decided to go to Washington. The Minister of Industry went down to Washington, but nobody would meet with him.

### *Government Orders*

The Americans are going to do something for the automotive sector to assist in filling the gap caused by the economic crisis and liquidity issue. There is a difference between what is happening here and what is happening in the United States. The United States had two sets of public hearings on the auto sector. Last year the U.S. had a series of hearings on the energy act and created a \$25 billion low interest loan program for the auto industry to get new technologies and cleaner vehicles. Then there was the actual bridging legislation for the loans. Whether or not one agrees with the loan program, at least the Americans went through the process. The United States passed its legislation. There were hearings and input was received. It made a lot of news. The Congress and the Senate had the opportunity to vet the legislation. The legislation went through that process and was actually delivered to the public. What do we have in Canada? We only have promises from the minister. There has been no input at the industry committee. We have not had that type of vetting process.

When one looks at the plan that the United States passed, it is a plan with different rules and things that are changing. The document, "A Call for Action: A Canadian Auto Strategy", was produced by the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council, CAPC, back in 2004. The auto industry, unions, suppliers and many other auto industry components warned the then Liberal government of the potential failure of the auto industry in the future if we did not lay out a plan. It put forward a simple and straightforward plan where results could be measured. It had a series of strategies calling for action. What have we done since then? Nothing. We have not done anything on it. That is unacceptable, because this plan could have been tabled with the budget bill. It could have been more extensive. The government had the time to do it.

What has happened in between is quite astonishing. We have seen the collapse of the auto industry, not only here but also in other parts of the world. There have been success stories. I reference the United States and its \$25 billion low interest loan program which was passed last year. The U.S. is already seeing results. General Motors is going to build the Volt in Detroit, Michigan. The state of Michigan recently signed on to assist in the battery procurement policy. The battery for the Volt will be produced in Detroit as well. Despite the challenges of the industry and where it is going, the Americans have already laid out the game plan.

What have we done on the Canadian side? In the last budget, money was cut from the auto sector. On top of that, the government imposed a new tax on vehicles. It kept the tax component of the eco-auto feebate program. For those who are not aware of that program, it was an unbelievable disaster. There was about \$116 million in that program. Most of that money went to vehicles produced overseas. That is the irony of what the Conservatives did in their first budget. They created this incentive program to buy certain vehicles. It did not work. On top of that, they ended up sending money to Japan, China, Korea and other areas where vehicles are produced. It is not acceptable in terms of a policy.

The Conservatives also brought in a tax on vehicles. They kept the tax, which represents around \$50 million a year in revenue for the government. That is the estimate from the industry. The United States laid out a plan that is very progressive, and which is focused on cleaner new vehicles, production, manufacturing and low interest

loans that are recoverable for the taxpayers. Here in Canada, the government added a new tax. It put some of that money into a new program of \$50 million per year for five years for a total of \$250 million. Basically, the industry had to go through h-e-double-hockey-sticks just to access it. That happened leading up to an election.

The government is sending the message that Canada is closed for business and partnerships to revolutionize the industry and that if people want to take advantage of one of the government programs, the Conservatives are going to make them squirm, beg and crawl. They are going to punish people publicly for wanting some type of a procurement element.

● (1120)

These things are not foreign to North America. Germany is the second largest auto producer and Japan is the third largest. Japan is a major exporter. Germany has major exports too, but it also does a lot more domestic. Germany and Japan have procurement policies that actually work for their industries. That element is out there. If the government wants to assume that a free market economy with no actual incentives is some type of carrot with which to approach the industry, the Conservatives are alone in the world in that. Even the United States does not do that. Nobody does that. If the Conservatives want to change that policy, then great, let us engage the world about that practice.

Until that time, if we keep our current automotive policy, we will see that what is happening will continue. We have gone from fourth in the world in assembly to eighth. What does that mean? It means that not only auto workers and their families are losing out on economic development, but so are those in the mould-making industry and the tool and die industry.

The tool and die industry has made an appeal to the Minister of Industry. That industry is owed about \$1 billion. The industry needs that money to prevent bankruptcy from happening.

There are other victims in this mess if we do not have a viable auto industry and one of the most value-added industries will disappear. It is going to cost money for things such as the United Way and skills training.

It is also important to think outside the automotive box. If all that industrial development goes into new technologies, they can actually revolutionize other industries, especially looking at some of the new technologies in the use of battery and other elements. It is an exciting time despite the challenges. Some new and interesting products are coming on line that will meet new customer desires. It is also going to provide an opportunity to have a greener, cleaner industry, which is really critical because we put so much faith in that.

It was interesting to see the minister, when it came to the budget, make a big to-do about the shoes he was going to buy. We saw him on TV when he bought some workboots. He came to work that day and decided that they did not fit right and they hurt his feet. It is ironic, because it is the same with this budget. It hurts a lot of Canadians and it does not fit right for what we need to do.

*Government Orders*

It is not even a question about how much money we are or are not spending. It is also about the way we actually spend. That is why it is important to recognize that this was an opportunity that was wasted.

I will point to one of the more interesting cases we have had recently and what could have been in the budget bill but is not. Today the New Democratic Party introduced a bill to respond to that. A procurement policy could have been part of it. I know that some people will say that the NDP wants to put up trade barriers and do something that would set off a trade war and create all kinds of problems, but that is a bunch of nonsense. Since the Great Depression, the United States has had a procurement policy in place. I would have liked to see one in this bill. What we could do openly and accountably is a percentage of that could go into Canadian manufacturing when there is a government procurement policy. That is done all over the world. Our partners do it. I do not regret that the United States does some of that. It is a challenge in some respects.

The most important example that has recently shown how poor we are in Canada in terms of strategy is the Navistar truck contract. I have spoken extensively about that, and I am going to keep talking about it because it is a great example of a missed opportunity and the lack of leadership.

Navistar, for those who are not aware, is in Chatham, Ontario. It produces trucks. A number of years ago, I and the member for Windsor—Tecumseh fought along with the CAW to get a modest investment from the federal government in that plant. It was saved, and it has paid back its worth. It is a windfall, not only with regard to the tax revenues to the nation but also to the workers and their families who have been contributing taxes.

What has happened is the government is not dealing with procurement policy, which is totally legal and which many municipalities endorse across the country right now. They back it because they understand it. We understand the rules. We can do this. The United States will not get upset with us for doing it. The Americans have a policy in place that has similar elements, and we accept that.

The Navistar truck plant in Chatham could produce the next load of defence vehicles, trucks that are necessary for our military. Ironically the government tendered it out, and what ended up happening is that Navistar International won the bid and the truck building component is in Texas. Texas is getting 300 million dollars' worth of work from the Conservatives, supported by the Liberals, and at the same time the workers in our communities are losing their jobs. Those are good paying jobs, jobs that this country invested in. The trucks we make are the best and we are going to lose out on that opportunity because of the ideology of the Conservative government.

● (1125)

The government is going to award a \$300 million contract to Navistar in Texas when that contract could have gone to our own community. The excuse is that there was \$800,000 of retooling necessary for that facility in Canada, but Canadians would have been doing that retooling. The value-added components would have been manufactured in Canada. There would have been economic benefits for Canadians who would have been paying taxes.

That investment would have been understood by the United States. The Americans would understand that Canadians want to build Canadian trucks for our Canadian men and women who are serving in our military. They would understand that. We understand when they do defence procurement for the same reason.

The Conservatives are allowing this to continue and are not cancelling the contract. It is unacceptable. Sending work down to Texas is not a solution for this country. It sends a message to all the others concerned with defence procurement. The government is saying that Canadians cannot be the ones who build for our men and women who serve in the military. That is the message the government is sending to people in Chatham, that they are fired and they are not going to be the ones who produce the vehicles for our military, that Texans can do it. That should have been in this bill. We could have done it.

What is also important in connecting the dots on this is that this country needs to have a manufacturing capacity for its sovereignty so that it includes components for shipbuilding, trucks, airplanes and other elements that are important for national infrastructure. A country needs to make sovereign decisions about what it does. The United States does that. I do not begrudge the Americans for that. If they want to build their military trucks in Texas and not in Chatham, I understand that because it is part of a plan for their country.

What do we have in Canada? We have no plan. Other contracting is being looked at right now. The plane contract is being examined. The Department of National Defence is eyeballing a single source contract that would exclude all Canadian aerospace manufacturers. It would be created and assembled in Italy. How is that possible? How can we have single source contracting for companies outside Canada?

What does that tell those companies that actually cluster and try to build around our manufacturing bases here in Canada? It tells them that if they invest and make that type of commitment to the Canadian people, if they do the training that is vitally necessary for the post-production development, they may not benefit from it, that we will simply have it built in Italy. That is the wrong message.

It is important that the government reverse the Navistar decision. It would send a message that we are serious. I expected that to be in the budget bill.

*Government Orders*

I spent a lot of time talking about Navistar and the auto sector, but I want to touch on one thing in the bill that is symbolic and important to me because of my background in developing programs for persons with disabilities with respect to employment and home services. Ironically in the bill there is a new program for home retrofit. Those who do some work on their houses get a 15% tax break on the first \$10,000 spent on their homes. It includes some really interesting things, such as, sod and decks. However, those who rent are excluded from this. Twenty-five per cent of Canadians rent their accommodations. I think about seniors in my riding who have rented houses or apartments for a long time. They are not eligible to upgrade their bathrooms or other areas to make them accessible. Meanwhile, those who want to put new sod on their lawns or expand their decks in Muskoka are going to get a tax break. Ironically those people are the ones who have to subsidize that program with their taxes in the first place. It is wrong. That is why the budget needs to be defeated.

• (1130)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I could tell by the emotion in the member's voice that he is very concerned about the people of Windsor West. What could the government do to make the auto industry viable in Canada?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I think one of the first things the government needs to identify is the need for a national auto strategy, something we have been advocating for a long time.

Interestingly enough, it was this party that worked with Greenpeace and the CAW a number of years ago to come up with a green auto strategy, one of the first of its kind in the world. It is important to note that even a number of years ago, we could see the writing on the wall in terms of where the industry needed to go and the challenges that were there.

We believe in that strategy to this day. It is one that would be very important. Also, "A Call for Action", the CAPC report, is still viable in many respects, so we would like to see it implemented as a national auto strategy.

It is interesting, because I remember that when David Emerson was a member of Parliament and a minister sitting with the Liberals, he said that if the Conservatives ever came to power, they would destroy the auto industry. How ironic is that? He then flip-flopped across the floor and became a Conservative, and he has certainly fulfilled that prophecy.

Right now in the United States we see a whole series of initiatives being supported. The Americans are not attacking their system right now. They are actually trying to work with it.

We have to change our attitude here on a national auto policy and look at the CAPC implementation levers that are there. Once again, that was done with a lot collaboration.

A second important front that we have to support is the parts, tool and die, and mould-making sectors. They are owed a lot of funds right now. They need to be supported with some low-interest loans that will pay back.

To those who are critical I can say that I understand the complications of supporting this type of initiative, but I want to remind the general public that when Chrysler was in hardship back

in 1985, there was a small loan package at that time. Not only did Chrysler pay it back, but it paid it back with interest and profits for the country. Since that time we have had a very successful manufacturing facility, the minivan plant in Windsor, which is arguably the best one in the world since World War II.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has laid out a number of points of interest and concern.

At the end of his speech he talked about things that were not in the budget. As I have followed the debate on the budget and now on the implementation bill, one of the things I have been thinking more and more about is if we look a little further down the road, what do the people of Canada look like? What is their condition? I am wondering about the stress and the despair and the general depression in those who have lost their jobs, and the impact on their health and on their need for social assistance and social services.

The last recession, in 1990, showed us that a property crime wave follows the unemployment rate. It is all a reflection of despair. All these things have a cost to them. The budget implementation bill does not provide for any increases in transfers to the provinces, which are ostensibly responsible for delivering health care services and social programs for those in need, as well as policing.

I wonder if the member shares the view that we have to look forward at the consequences of going through a protracted and deep recession.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, in Canada and as New Democrats it is important to recognize something the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has often mentioned in the House, and that is the shrinkage of the middle class. We witness Canadians having to work longer for less. We are seeing an erosion of our quality of life.

That is what I am concerned about, especially when we look at the stimulus package and the elements of the budget. I really think it fails because it provides no legacy push toward where we need to go to regain our middle class.

That is why I use the Navistar example all the time. It is because all those United Way donations will be terminated as people are fired and no longer work. Then we miss out on the civil society measures. Interestingly enough, I commissioned a research paper to see what other countries were doing with regard to their laid-off workers. Germany is actually spending a lot of its money on social infrastructure. It is doing renovations to schools, hospitals and even day care, and it is also adding capacity.

We have had a number of economists claim that investment in social infrastructure will create more jobs. For example, a child care job will create three jobs, in contrast to other types of tax cuts, which would create only one job.

In Canada we have drifted away from our middle-class principles in understanding that we want a balanced civil society that includes social justice and social infrastructure. That is the best way for us to be productive.

I think that when we look at the challenges ahead, the budget fails on that measure.



*Government Orders*

•(1135)

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the excellent intervention by my colleague from Windsor West in the House of Commons today and I support virtually everything he said.

I would like to ask him to explain the Navistar situation a bit more, because I have also raised this matter in my role as defence critic for the New Democratic Party. I do not understand why the government would give such a big contract to build vehicles for the Canadian Forces to Texas rather than to a plant here in Canada, a plant that obviously has done this kind of work in the past and could continue to do this work in the future and supply the Canadian Forces with the needed vehicles.

My colleague talked about the people in Windsor West who are affected by this decision. I want him to know that I have received letters from people right across Canada who are opposed to this decision of the government. I would ask him to explain how we could change this and what his interventions have been with the Conservative government over this issue.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work as well as the question.

I have actually written the minister. We have had interventions, and we can tell that the Conservatives are clearly uncomfortable about this because they know what they have done is wrong. They know it, but it is time for them to fix it. They can no longer hide and run away from it; they need to fix it.

Canadians can build for their men and women of service. They can do that. They are competent, capable and able to do so. Why does the government fail to see the value of its own workforce, a workforce that could actually procure and develop this? That is not acceptable. It needs to be reversed.

People really need to understand that this issue is not only about Windsor and Chatham-Kent—Essex, but about our entire country. We look at the potential for some new ships being built, often described as rowboats or tiny boats because they are small craft. Where are they going to be built? Everything counts at this point in time.

The rules are very clear. The United States does a lot of its own defence procurement, and we respect that. As a nation, we have not challenged the Americans. We have not taken them to court. We have not tried to renegotiate these elements. We have accepted it as a country, and they would accept the same from us, because that is part of a partnership. What is good for one is good for the other, unless we want to engage in a wider discussion. If we actually had the policy, maybe that would happen with the United States, and we would engage in discussion and go down that road. However, simply doing nothing is not acceptable.

How we can tender a \$300 million contract to a source company outside this country at the same time that trained people are being handed pink slips to go home? They are trained and doing it right now. They are doing truck production. In fact when Navistar tried to move some production down to Mexico, where it had been doing some of this, for a period of time it had to send those vehicles back to Chatham to be fixed, because Mexico was not doing the right job.

The people have the qualifications and experience. They want to produce the trucks for our men and women in military service. They want to be part of the procurement, not just because it is a job but because it is a mission for our country. It is about the connection and the bond of people being able to do procurement for their own military and having pride in a nation. Why the government does not understand that is beyond me. Why can it not just say that it made a mistake and is going to fix it, and that Canadians are the ones who are going to be doing the procurement?

In terms of actually retooling the facility, \$800,000 is nothing. Interestingly enough, we would then have the capacity to increase the volume if necessary, to fix vehicles with additional parts, and to service the vehicles. All those things would be done here. The United States would simply understand that, because they have it in their system, and we respect it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I will bring to the attention of members that having completed five hours of debate, we will now be moving to 10-minute speeches and a 5-minute question and comment period.

The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

•(1140)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again I am honoured and humbled to serve my beautiful community of Etobicoke North and raise the issues of my constituents in this, their House of Commons.

Five women—Emily Murphy, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Irene Parlyby, Louise McKinney and Nellie McClung—contested the notion that the legal definition of persons excluded women. In 1929 they took their quest to the highest level of appeal, the British Privy Council, which ultimately pronounced women as persons. It was a remarkable victory for equal rights, and as a result, the five courageous women were immortalized on Parliament Hill in 2000.

At the unveiling of the bronze statute in their honour, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson said she hoped that the monument would inspire people to continue the work of the famous five. “Never retreat; never explain; never apologize”, Clarkson said in repeating a quotation from Nellie McClung, or in Emily Murphy’s words, “We want women leaders today as never before, leaders who are not afraid to be called names and who are willing to go out and fight.”

Many of us walk past the statute of the five determined women each day on the way to this very House. Each year on October 18 we celebrate Persons Day, and on March 8 we recognize International Women’s Day.

Recently December 10, 2008, marked the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a time to take action on the urgent human rights violations which continue to exist today.

Instead of waging a war on Canada’s gender pay gap, which violates article 23 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the government instead chose to narrow legal options open to women and to take aim at a woman’s right to use the courts to obtain pay equity.

*Government Orders*

The government says that the present system of using the courts for pay equity is long and costly, so it wants to modernize it by removing the right of women to use the courts to achieve pay equity. If the government achieves its goal, pay equity will be settled at the bargaining table, and not in the courts.

What would this mean to Canadian women who work outside the home and do not have a union? What would it mean to women who, as we know, fare poorer than men in the bargaining process? What would it mean to the 23% of families that are single-parent and headed by women in my riding of Etobicoke North, the women who scramble every month just to make ends meet, yet lose almost a quarter for every dollar a man is paid? What would it mean to the children who are poor because their mothers are poor, and to child care, and to early child education?

Today one in six Canadian children grows up in poverty. Research shows that for every dollar a country invests in giving children a good start in life, the country saves seven dollars in spending on health and other problems that arise when children's basic needs are not met. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and UNICEF place Canada last among industrialized nations when it comes to availability and public funding of child care services.

What would it mean for a woman's pension? Let us remember that women lose on every pay and on every contribution toward retirement.

The government is also planning to pass legislation that would limit annual pay increases in the public sector at a time when women are still catching up after years of discriminatory pay practices.

This attack on equity should come as no surprise. Canada fell from 18th place in 2007 to 31st in 2008 in the latest gender gap rankings released by the World Economic Forum last November. Canada's performance went unacknowledged in Ottawa.

● (1145)

A person's pay, particularly in this fiscal crisis, is critical to family, community and national prosperity. Women control 68% of consumer spending in Canada and are, in fact, the keepers of the household budget. Sadly, women are concerned about the current crisis and leery to spend. Sixty-five per cent of women plan to cut spending, compared to 58% of men. Forty-one per cent of women feel they are too much in debt, compared to 27% of men. Thirty per cent of women are insecure about their finances, compared to 19% of men.

Those statistics have tremendous implications, as consumer spending is the largest contributor to Canada's economic health. It accounts for 55¢ of every dollar of national productivity.

If the government's economic stimulus package does work for women, it will not work for Canada. In order to keep cash circulating, the government needed to address women's anxieties, such as EI eligibility and equal pay to put food on the table, to pay for their children's education and to save for their retirement. Investment in child care helps women and their families participate in the economy.

Canadian researchers calculated a 2:1 economic and social return for every dollar invested in child care. American researchers demonstrated a 3:1 or a 4:1 return for low income families and showed that childhood development programs could have a substantial payoff for governments, improve labour skills, reduce poverty and improve global competitiveness.

How can the government claim to protect the vulnerable when it provides nothing? In terms of the national child benefit supplement for families making \$20,000 and for families living on \$25,000 to \$35,000, it provides only \$436, which is the equivalent of 12 days of rent for a one-room apartment in my Etobicoke North riding.

While the government was working to undermine pay equity in Canada, President Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter fair pay act, recognizing equal pay as an important economic issue that affects not only women but entire families. It was the first piece of legislation to be signed into law in the new presidency. The new president said, I intend "to send a clear message that making our economy work means making sure it works for everyone, that there are no second-class citizens in our workplaces, and that it's not just unfair and illegal — it's bad for business — to pay somebody less because of their gender...."

Last week I met with our riding youth group. A young man wanted to know, "why the government was launching an attack on women". He said, "I just want the same as a woman; nothing more, nothing less". I did not have the heart to tell him that when he graduates university he is likely to make \$5,000 to \$6,000 more than his female counterpart and that this gap will accrue week by week, year upon year.

The government should be working tirelessly to ensure that this economic crisis does not create further inequalities.

The future of Canada depends considerably on investment in women as their economic health and social well-being determines the health of their children who are the adults of tomorrow. As the first step to protecting the next generation, the government needs to fight for pay equity, so long overdue. Next time parliamentarians walk past The Famous Five, we should all be inspired to do the right thing.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Etobicoke North on a thoughtful presentation on the needs of Canadian women in our society today. She gave some of the history of the Famous Five women who ensured that women became full citizens of this country. I do not think that story could be repeated too often.

*Government Orders*

When we look at what is happening in the budget implementation bill, the government is taking away a woman's right to take her pay equity complaint to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. It is opening up Canadian industry for foreign ownership. It is even putting a for sale sign on Air Canada. It is punitively going after our students who carry Canada loan guarantees from the government.

This is a budget that totally fails to protect the vulnerable in our society, including the women she spoke of and including children in our society.

In the past, the Prime Minister and the government made a commitment to the House of Commons that they would not include, unnecessarily, legislation for confidence motions but the government has done just that by sliding into a budget these changes to human rights legislation, the rollbacks of the RCMP wages and a number of other very critical issues that impact upon women and families in this society.

Why is my colleague going to support this budget implementation bill when she herself has laid out a number of very critical reasons that it is not worthy of support?

• (1150)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, the first six months of this year saw Canada have the worst economic performance of the G8.

In September, we were told that a recession would not be coming. In October, we were told that there would be no deficit. At the time of the economic statement, we were told that there would be a small surplus. Twelve days later, we were told by the Bank of Canada that we were in a recession.

In the last three months we have lost 250,000 jobs. The time for action is now. We need to protect Canadians and we need an economic stimulus now.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, congratulate my colleague from Etobicoke North on a passionate dissertation on the genesis of rights for women, but women's rights are, after all, human rights, and now that pay equity has been eliminated by the government, the government has shown, not only contempt for women but contempt for gender parity.

I would like to ask my colleague from Etobicoke North about pay equity and why it is so important for the women in her riding of Etobicoke North, which is one of the most multicultural in all of Canada.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, my riding is one of the most multicultural in the country. We rank fifth in terms of diversity. We also rank second of 308 ridings in terms of the percentage of people engaged in manufacturing. We have lost two companies in the last week.

On the issue of women, almost a quarter of my riding is headed by single parents and 95% are single women. They need to keep their jobs. They need a package now.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to an intervention that we heard this afternoon on the pay equity question. Why is it that, even when the committee for the status of women in the 38th Parliament heard from organizations, such as the National Association for Women and the Law, that the

current regime of using the Canadian Human Rights Commission was a disservice to women, she wants to keep it status quo and not look at new legislation that will advance pay equity for women?

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to look at the World Economic Forum figures. We have dropped from 18th to 31st in this past year. This new legislation will not protect women. Women lose out at the bargaining table.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the budget passed last week by the Conservative government and its Liberal allies is totally unacceptable to Quebec and the people of Quebec who are entitled, in times of economic crisis, to expect appropriate action on the part of the federal government.

Just two years ago, the Conservatives had the House agree to recognize the nation of Quebec in a spirit, they said, of openness. The bill we are discussing today shows that this openness has suddenly disappeared.

Last January 15, the National Assembly of Quebec voted unanimously in favour of a motion demanding that Ottawa provide assistance to Quebec to help it get through the economic crisis. It is obvious that Quebec will lose a lot of money as a result of the tabling of this budget, especially in regard to equalization. The changes to equalization will cost it a billion dollars in 2009-2010. In addition, the bill sets the stage for the establishment of a Canada-wide securities commission and reiterates the government's intention to trample over Quebec's jurisdictions in this regard.

The Prime Minister is choosing once again to ignore his past promises to respect Quebec's jurisdictions. It would have been good if the Quebec Liberals had been allowed to vote against this budget in order to oppose the loss of a billion dollars to Quebec, just as the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberals were allowed to do. Right now, among the Quebec contingent, only the Bloc Québécois and the NDP member are opposing this loss of a billion dollars.

When I meet people in my riding, I am ashamed of our government because it does nothing to help them. People see it helping big corporations, like automobile companies, oil companies and banks, but they themselves are left by the wayside in an exercise based more on ideology than compassion for the people who are hurt most by the current situation.

The affluent people in our society will manage to get along fine despite the shaky economy. The tax cuts benefit people earning at least \$81,000 a year, which is well beyond the middle class. Older people, retirees, the unemployed and middle class families will not benefit from this budget as the rich people will.

*Government Orders*

As for seniors, the Bloc Québécois has often raised the issue of the guaranteed income supplement and the fact that seniors have not been getting their fair share. According to FADOQ, the Quebec federation of seniors, the 2009 budget is most certainly not the route toward improving the lot of low income seniors. Despite numerous urgings to do something, the federal government has neglected to provide any additional support to the least well off of seniors, the guaranteed income supplement recipients.

Thanks to the mismanagement of the federal government, seniors who receive only the old age pension and the guaranteed income supplement will not even have the opportunity to get up over the poverty line, because their income is so limited. The government is therefore keeping them poor.

Yet, during the recent prebudget consultations, FADOQ called for improvements to the guaranteed income supplement, specifically through automatic enrolment—not the case now—along with improved benefits and full retroactivity, as called for in a bill introduced by me in the last Parliament. We are not talking riches here, just a minimum income that should be guaranteed to everyone in a society that claims to respect its seniors.

• (1155)

Incidentally, that adjustment to the guaranteed income supplement would dovetail with the recovery plan. If seniors had a little more money, that money would be spent in the immediate community, thereby creating an economic revival with the activity that would be generated. That money would not be going out of the country.

As far as employment insurance is concerned, this past January the Quebec National Assembly called upon the government in Ottawa to improve the employment insurance program by loosening the eligibility criteria and enabling workers in training to continue to draw benefits. Turning a deaf ear to the requests from the National Assembly, the government responded by increasing the duration of EI benefits by five weeks for the next two years.

According to the statistics, only 10% of workers eligible for employment insurance use up all the period of benefits they are covered for. Since we know that less than half of people are eligible for EI, of that group only 10% use up all their benefits and would therefore benefit from what is in this budget. If the government had instead abolished the two week waiting period for workers who lose their jobs, all workers who lost their jobs would at least have been able to benefit from one provision in the budget, by immediately drawing EI benefits.

With regard to social housing, there are measures that affect people, and people want their government to come up with solutions. The current budget includes \$2 billion for social housing, but only \$400 million will be used to build new housing units.

It is estimated that Quebec needs 52,000 social housing units. In Laval alone, 1,062 needy people are waiting for social housing from the municipal housing bureau. This program is administered by the cities, and demand is high. In fact, demand is so high that people come to my constituency office to ask us to support their application for social housing.

It is difficult to step in at the federal level. We have to refer people or try to convince the municipal government to provide them with

housing as soon as possible. But the government lacks the will to build new units.

In my riding, there is a federal penitentiary that was decommissioned 20 years ago. For 20 years, the penitentiary has not been used for anything. It was built by the federal government in 1978, and people moved into the surrounding area. Most of these people worked at the penitentiary, which explains the construction all around it. Now that the penitentiary is no longer used for its intended purpose, the government is dragging its feet on converting the building so that people can use it.

I have represented this riding for four and a half years. I have had access to studies the government has conducted into how the penitentiary could be converted or repurposed. I have always stressed that plans should include affordable social housing for the local community. People currently have to leave the neighbourhood because there is no space available.

The recovery plan was a perfect opportunity to act on this proposal, which previous governments had considered. I have been calling for this for four and a half years. Of course, it would have taken political and financial will. This government's recovery plan, which includes investment to stimulate employment, was a golden opportunity to use federal facilities to benefit people and to provide the social housing they need so badly.

• (1200)

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am happy to discuss Bill C-10, a very large bill. If any members from other parties are slouching back in their seat and waiting for the bill to pass because it simply would implement the budget, they had better look twice at the bill.

It is 444 pages long, with 471 clauses. A lot of new things are in it, things that we never heard in the budget. How many MPs knew that a whole rewrite of the Navigable Waters Protection Act would be it? It is not even mentioned in the budget. Pages 291 to 306 deal with those changes, and I will talk about those later.

Other major changes in the bill affect the Competition Act. I refer to the comments by the member for Pickering—Scarborough East, who is an expert on the Competition Act. He said that these were the most drastic changes to be act since 1986, that they were not based on the broad consensus of the Red Wilson and that it was too broad to be swept under the rug quickly, which is what is happening at this time.

*Government Orders*

It is amazing that no Conservatives are speaking to the major changes to those two acts and to a number of changes to other acts. These were not mentioned at all in the budget. It is also amazing that members from the government say they want quick passage of this bill. Why would they add all these complications, things that should have significant Parliamentary debate, into a budget implementation act? That slows the process if members are to do due diligence and deal with these other items?

I want to spend my time talking about items in the budget and future budgets, based mostly on the feedback I have received from people in my riding. A lot of changes will have to be added or made in the future.

First, I received a number of comments from first nations on infrastructure. They make the point that they have different infrastructure needs. They do not normally build convention centres, but they have all kinds of particular needs and they want to be eligible for those funds. They want to ensure they have access to the infrastructure programs and they want clarity on the specific funds available solely to first nations.

Second, they want to ensure they have an important role in the new northern agency. Because they are half the population north of 60°, this is very important. They have a different world view, different opportunities and different challenges. There are 23 governments in my riding of which 22 are first nations and municipalities. How will they be involved in the establishment of the new agency?

The administration of housing funds is a particularly upsetting point. The northern housing funds are a very excellent allocation in the budget. However, last time the minister, who is now the Minister of the Environment, had hoped all that money would go to first nations, but it did not. It was not specifically given to self-governing first nations to deliver it. Now \$400 million is set aside in the budget for on reserve first nations in the south. However, it is not specified how much of the \$200 million north of 60° is for first nations, nor how it will be delivered. Once again, the first nations are furious about the repetition of this problem.

It speaks to a bigger problem. The new governments we have created, which, in some areas, have equal to more power than the provinces of Ontario or Quebec, have not been treated like governments. The funds they will be delivering end up being run through other governments.

With regard to housing money, the bill specifically says “social housing” units in the north. For aboriginal people in the south, it says “on-reserve housing”. A chief in the north spoke to me about this. He wants his people to be self-sufficient. The people want to build housing and charge rents without it being solely limited to social housing units. With the new economic development plan, they have their own world view. They want to ensure they are recognized for that and have their views respected.

The biggest item for first nations is the financial transfer arrangement. The nine year review has been going on for a number of years now.

●(1205)

The biggest item for first nations is the financial transfer arrangement. The review has been on going for a number of years now. We need a mandate from the federal government. We need to get on with it quickly, conclude it and implement it. Before the election, the minister said that he would do this quickly. There are benefits for everyone, for Arctic sovereignty, for economic development, for governance in the northern strategy. Let us get on with it and get it done.

Hopefully the government will continue its support on interoperability of our first responders in emergencies. I am happy with what it is doing so far. Police, health responders and ambulance operators are working together to ensure communications are interoperable. This will save lives, both the responders and the victims. Lives have been lost because of a lack of interoperability. I hope this gets due attention in Parliament.

President Obama has already brought it up, and the U.S. governors have a good understanding of it.

Another item that could have been put back in the budget was the GST tourism rebate. Once again, this is an obvious stimulus. Virtually every other major country in the world does it, yet the government cancelled the rebate for individual tourists. That hurts our tourism industry.

Once again, the municipalities would like infrastructure funds to flow through a system like the gas tax, so it can be done quickly. The member for Willowdale brought this up, as have our municipalities. They want the funds to flow quickly.

Related to the northern agreement, we hope the government will ensure it is streamed individually. Each of the three territories in the north are totally different and have different needs. That needs to be respected. There is also talk about oversight of such a fund by major leaders in the north. They do not want too much money spent on the administration. I have no problem with putting enough in to do the administration properly, while ensuring they have the programs to deliver it. That would make the percentage of administration small.

Millions upon millions have been allocated in the budget to help the vulnerable. We have said over and over that it is not enough. The Department of Finance has calculated that it would only be \$900 million to cancel the two week waiting period for which we had asked, and it could be allocated from other items in the budget.

*Government Orders*

On the RCMP rollback, and I have mentioned this before in the House, a number of RCMP officers in my area are very upset that the government made a deal with them. Now it has gone back on its word. This is a critical service for our nation and it is a dangerous occupation in which to be.

Related to the credit card increases for individuals and business, there is good news and bad news. There is nothing related to businesses in the budget. Related to individuals, there are provisions that will make for more transparency. If the credit card companies want to increase fees, if payments are missed, they will have to announce the increase before implementing it so people will know it is coming.

I have had two phone calls today from people who very upset with the heritage minister for suggesting he has no opposition to commercials on CBC. Across the country, everyone is still very upset with the heritage minister for cancelling programs for the international marketing of our artists. These programs were cancelled in the last budget, but were never reinstated.

The navy league approached me about the building of boats. The Prime Minister promised three icebreakers and has now cancelled two of those. The ice-strengthened supply ships seem to have been cancelled. The aircraft for Yellowknife seem to have been cancelled. The search and rescue planes for the north are nowhere to be seen.

On the infrastructure program, which we called for last October, we recently found that the terms and conditions for the program are not even ready. It is not that the projects are not shovel ready, it is the program is not ready yet.

The bill proposes major changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. I am not saying that some of those changes are not needed, they are, and Parliament agrees, but this is not the place to do it. It will not speed up projects.

•(1210)

A lot of the problems that people are complaining about are in the Fisheries Act, not the Navigable Waters Protection Act. If an inspection needs to be done of an airplane before it takes off, the inspection is not cancelled because it will take too long. More inspectors need to be hired to get it done more quickly.

Finally, the elimination of the regulations from the statutory instrument review in the Navigable Waters Protection Act is not something—

•(1215)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I do not know why my colleague is supporting the budget. He spent 10 minutes basically running it down.

One thing he did talk about, which is important because it does not get a lot of attention, is the change to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. In the last session of Parliament Liberals in the transport committee, which I am a member of, actually reduced the opportunity to study this bill. A motion was brought forward that was supported by the Liberals and Conservatives.

What ended up happening was that witnesses from environmental groups were limited, even in committee, down to one hour to raise concerns about changing the act. I am glad that he has caught on to this, but I would ask him why his party in committee was opposed to having more witnesses and would his party support such a dramatic change because this is going to have significant consequences and there has been no input at all?

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Madam Speaker, I am glad the member supports my point of view that there needs to be a further review of this outside the budget implementation act.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Yukon who yesterday spent a number of hours going through all the briefings of Bill C-10. We had an opportunity to talk about some of the observations.

In addition to the matters that the member indicated were probably not adequately addressed in the budget, one issue has to do with this document itself and the fact that it appears to deal with certain areas which are really beyond the scope of the budget and effectively makes the document an omnibus bill where a whole bunch of other things has been thrown in. It is over 500 pages long. It is going to take an awfully long time for us to get this done.

I am wondering whether the member has any concerns that this will in fact delay the flow of the important programs, the money for the programs and infrastructure, et cetera, and that there will be lags such that the critical objectives of protecting and creating jobs through things like infrastructure spending and other legitimate stimuli are going to be delayed beyond the best interests of Canadians.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Madam Speaker, I agree. As I said, the reason Liberals are supporting the budget is because there are millions upon millions of dollars for the vulnerable. There is not enough, of course, as we have said time and time again, but that money cannot flow until the bill is passed.

There are many things in this budget, and I mentioned a lot of them, but I will talk about one subsection that has nothing to do with saving money or helping the vulnerable. It is the Navigable Waters Protection Act and in paragraph 327(12)(2.2) of the budget implementation bill it says the regulations are not statutory regulations and cannot be reviewed by the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations.

The expert in that area in Parliament, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, outlined that all regulations should be viewed by Parliament. People are already worried that things are done by regulations when cabinet can put them through and Parliament does not review them. At least they are reviewed in committee for its legality, that it complies with the statute that created it and the charter and that there is no unexpected or unusual power. Why would a clause exist that exempts the regulations under the Navigable Waters Protection Act from the scrutiny of parliamentarians?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister was very clear that he would not introduce bills or motions in the House that required a confidence vote other than for financial issues, traditional budgetary issues. I want to ask the member for Yukon this question. Based on the theme of his speech today, does he not agree with me that in fact the Prime Minister has once again broken a promise to the House and the Canadian people by incorporating a number of provisions in this bill that are totally unrelated to financial matters or only partially related that should not be confidence votes? If he does agree with me, then why does his party continue to support this budget and this particular bill?

• (1220)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that there are a number of items here. As I said in my speech, I do not think this is the place for them. They are regular act reviews. They should go through the normal legislative process with the normal number of witnesses. It should be worked out that way. The government should not complicate getting money to the vulnerable by putting them into this act when they are only peripherally related to improving the economy and helping the vulnerable. The government should not be complicating the issue like this.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to discuss the key issues in the recent Conservative-Liberal budget. The new Liberal Party leader's about-face sets us back to square one. Once again we clearly see that no federalist party is capable of understanding Quebec's real interests.

During his first term, the Conservative Prime Minister appeared to show some openness with the supposed recognition of the Quebec nation, but we know what happened next: cuts to not-for-profit organizations, to economic development and to culture. It is all well and good to talk about nationhood, but a nation without culture is not really a nation.

Let us turn our attention to employment insurance. The Prime Minister requested that Parliament be prorogued. One might have hoped that he would use the time to find solutions to meet the needs of Quebecers. Rumours propagated by Quebec backbenchers and ministers suggested that the Conservatives would be more sensitive to the demands of our unemployed workers. We had two minimum demands to help them: eliminate the two week waiting period and make the employment insurance system more accessible. In response, we were told there would be no changes. Unemployed workers, in the midst of a crisis, are faced with the stress of surviving for two, four or even six weeks with no income, that is, if they even qualify. In a burst of generosity, the Conservatives decided to add five weeks. How can people benefit from those five weeks if they do not even qualify? Nevertheless, we support that measure. It is a small step in the right direction, but we will continue to demand major changes to the employment insurance system.

If we want to make major changes to employment insurance, we have to think of the unemployed. The government has never given a moment's thought to the unemployed. Let me explain. The government says that it will allocate a billion dollars to retraining workers, but we have to be careful here. For who can say, today,

what the jobs of tomorrow will be? I do not think that the government knows that right now. Last September and October, the government did not even know that there was going to be a deficit. So I do not think it knows exactly what kind of jobs will be available in two years. The Conservatives are about to spend a billion dollars on something they do not understand. They are about to spend taxpayers' money without a real plan in mind.

When the last budget was tabled, and even when we came back after the election campaign, the only political party that had a costed, balanced budget to propose was the Bloc Québécois. The other three parties, the federalists, had no budget. The government in power had to submit two economic statements and two budgets to come up with a concrete plan that was able to satisfy the Liberals, who leapt at the opportunity to support it.

Still we are talking about people in need, particularly workers. That reminds me of the program for older worker assistance that the government flatly rejected. It would have been a big step forward in helping people 55 and older who lose their jobs because of plant closures or massive layoffs. Such a program would have enabled them to live with dignity until retirement. But the government has no interest in helping these people find new jobs, so they have to go on welfare. They still have kids in university and house payments they can no longer make. Take, for example, a 58-year-old with a grade nine education who loses his job. I would really like our Conservative friends to explain how that person can be retrained, how they plan to find him another job, or what kind of training they can give him. I still have my doubts.

• (1225)

This program would have accomplished two things. First, as I mentioned earlier, it would have bridged older workers to their retirement at age 65. It would also have freed up jobs for younger workers. With economic recovery, there would be more jobs available. However, the government ignored this and I am extremely disappointed to see that they think only of themselves.

Then there are tax cuts. Does anyone benefit other than those who do not need them? The tax cuts should have targeted workers with the lowest salaries; instead, they benefit workers with the highest. The government wants to help people but they are not being practical.

Furthermore, they have again overlooked our seniors. What tax cuts were they given? To benefit from a tax cut, you have to pay tax. If you do not pay tax, you cannot use a tax cut. That is obvious. The majority of people who live below the poverty line get nothing, not even one dollar. Seniors received a mere two to three additional dollars. Some people in my riding said to me, "Rather than increasing pensions by \$2, they should have kept that money and given it to those who need it even more."

*Government Orders*

There are even more serious issues with this budget. Agriculture is mentioned. That is another problem. I have been here four and a half years. Every year, over the past three or four years, there has been talk of how to eliminate supply management. I think they have found a solution and I will read a passage about this. It refers to tariffs on milk proteins: "The federal government is issuing these regulations to comply with a ruling of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, the CITT. Upheld by the Federal Court of Appeal, it is a very serious ruling that could negatively affect the supply management system."

How did they manage to do such a thing? This came about following a misunderstanding between the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Canada Border Services Agency. The two had different classifications for milk protein concentrates with more than 85% concentration. The result was that a Swiss business, Advidia, was able to take its case to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal and challenge the regulations that classified its Promix 372B products under a tariff line which is tariff free as well as under the more expensive tariff line 0404. The Tribunal and the Federal Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the business, creating a dangerous precedence and shaking the very foundation of our supply management system, which relies on rigorous protection of our borders.

The Bloc Québécois cannot oppose these regulations because they are intended to bring us into compliance with a ruling from the Canadian International Trade Tribunal and the Federal Court of Appeal. But I can guarantee that the Bloc will continue to fight to fully protect the supply management system by pressuring Canada's lead negotiators at the WTO to not make any concessions that would undermine, in any way, the supply management system.

As we can see, the Conservative government is not responding to Quebec's expectations, be it in terms of employment insurance, agriculture, the forestry and manufacturing sectors, tax reductions or the unilateral creation of a Canadian securities commission.

Basically, the Bloc Québécois is not satisfied with the majority of the points mentioned in Bill C-10. Consequently, the Bloc Québécois will vote against the bill.

• (1230)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the main parts of the Liberal amendment to the budget dealt with three things: first, to protect the most vulnerable in our society during this difficult time; second, to protect existing jobs; and third to create new jobs. With regard to the first, it appears to me that the employment insurance system has been included in the budget in terms of some additional benefits, but it does not change the rules of eligibility for benefits. Nor does the budget consider eliminating the two week waiting period, which, given the financial condition that we are in, is a very important tool and we have missed an opportunity.

I wonder if the member would care to comment on the importance of taking care of the most vulnerable, particularly those who lose their jobs and have significant obligations.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** Madam Speaker, the member has struck a nerve on the topic of employment insurance. I would like to point out that only 46% of people meet the requirements to qualify for employment insurance. That being said, there can be any number of measures, but one must qualify in order to be eligible. Even if people were given 90% or 100% of their salary, less than half of all people can receive EI benefits.

If the two week waiting period were eliminated, that would be a step in the right direction. However, much more is needed. The Bloc Québécois proposed specific improvements to the employment insurance system. The Liberals and the Conservatives did not think it wise to move forward on this. They voted for the current budget, which in no way meets these demands.

I hope the government will soon listen to reason and amend the Employment Insurance Act to give more people the opportunity to qualify for employment insurance.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Conservative-Liberal budget has a provision that allows homeowners to get a subsidy to replace their sod or put a deck on their cottage. There are approximately four million renters in Canada and many of them are seniors, as in Windsor West where they have been in the same house or apartment for a long period of time and plan to stay there. Those people might want to renovate their bathroom to make it more handicap accessible but they will be denied the subsidy under the Liberal-Conservative plan.

I wonder if the hon. member thinks it is fair that one can put down sod or a deck on one's cottage and get a subsidy but one cannot upgrade and make one's apartment more accessible for persons with disabilities.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Vincent:** Madam Speaker, my NDP colleague is quite right. We could have pushed a little further from this side. People can do all the landscaping, lay all the asphalt and do all the redecorating they want, but they still need the money to do all those things. While this government went about giving tax breaks and trying to improve the lives of our most vulnerable citizens, it was completely off the mark. By ignoring the most vulnerable and giving nothing to seniors, only one segment of society can benefit from these tax breaks linked to renovations.

I wish to reiterate that it is important to understand that the Conservative government's measures, supported by the Liberal government, did not produce the desired results. The target group was our most vulnerable citizens and the government was unable to hit the mark.

[English]

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the residents of Mississauga—Streetsville to speak to the budget implementation bill and to ensure the Conservative government is held accountable to implement the stimulus measures promised.



*Government Orders*

For Canadians, the crisis is not about structural deficits or the cyclical nature of the markets. It is about the nest egg they have worked hard to build over their entire working lives but which was cut in half almost overnight. They worry about how they will pay for their children's educations, their mortgages or rents and how they will put food on the table for their families.

We are living through unprecedented times brought on by an economic crisis and exacerbated by the Conservative government's poor fiscal management during these times. Canadians need a government they can trust. They require political stability and economic certainty to weather this economic storm. Canadians need to know that the government in Ottawa is fighting for their jobs, their savings and their pensions, but most of all they need hope, which is why the Liberal Party has put partisanship aside and has supported this budget.

After consulting with Canadians, Liberals are willing to support the budget on the condition that the Prime Minister and his government are held accountable for their actions. We have placed conditions on our support, such as the delivery of mandatory progress reports to be tabled in March, June and December where the Conservative government must demonstrate that the money promised is flowing to Canadians in a timely manner.

The Conservative government has mismanaged the economy for three years, squandering the \$13 billion surplus created by the Liberal Party through a decade of sound fiscal management. The Conservatives recklessly spent the \$3 billion contingency fund left to them in good faith by our party. They did not put money aside for a rainy day when times were good and they did not plan for the future. Now the Liberal Party has put them on notice that this is not acceptable. We have put them on probation.

In truth, this budget is filled with numerous measures that would not have been possible without the pressure put on it by the Liberal Party over the past three years. Some of the measures we fought for include new investment in social housing and infrastructure, targeted support for low and middle income Canadians through the expansion of the child tax benefit and working income tax benefit, additional funding for skills training and enhanced employment insurance, and investment in regional development agencies throughout the country such as the Southern Ontario Development Agency, SODA, which will benefit the auto industry and the manufacturing sectors that have been so devastated.

Our support for the budget is not unconditional. It recognizes that the budget is significantly flawed. It does not protect the most vulnerable. It does not protect the jobs of today or help create the jobs of tomorrow. It does not go far enough to protect Canadians who have lost or will soon lose jobs. Two hundred and thirteen thousand jobs have been lost in the past three months alone, 71,000 of them in Ontario. That is 55% of the job losses in this country.

My riding is not immune. I have heard from many of my constituents about the hardships they now face because of the downsizing and layoffs.

This budget opens the door for attacks on pay equity for women. It also breaks the Conservatives' promise to all Canadian provinces on equalization. It also missed an opportunity to invest in clean

industries of tomorrow and to kickstart the green economy to make Canada a world leader. Finally, it lacks a clear plan for getting us out of the \$85 billion deficit the government will lead us into over the next five years, a number that will rise as the projections grow worse.

Despite these substantial deficiencies, the Liberal Party has decided to support the budget to ensure that the money flows to those sectors and those individuals who need it most. Let me be clear. We want to see the money getting into the hands of municipalities where it is needed most. That is why our party has made regular progress reports a stipulation for our support.

In my time remaining, I would like to address the five key areas that are of specific concern for the residents of Mississauga—Streetsville: first, the critical need for infrastructure funding to flow; second, the lack of fairness in the employment insurance program; third, the vital need for investment in social housing; fourth, the serious lack of a universal child care program; and fifth, a fundamental lack of jobs stimulus for women.

First, on infrastructure. Municipalities, such as Mississauga, which have shovel-ready projects, have been disappointed in the past by the government's web of red tape. The legendary mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, calls it “the glacial pace at which funding announcements turn into cash”. Mississauga is still waiting for its share of the \$33 billion building Canada fund to flow for projects such as the \$52 million rapid transit bus system, the \$30 million for downtown revitalization, the \$20 million for Sheridan College, the \$10 million for Burnhamthorpe Branch Library, the \$8 million for fire halls and the \$4 million for pathway lighting, just to name a few. Unfortunately, municipalities will be required to pay one-third of all the project costs and few will have the ability to do so.

● (1235)

As reported in *The Mississauga News* just last week:

Not only is the cheque not in the mail for Canadian municipalities, but the instructions for writing the cheque aren't even written yet.

Even though federal politicians trumpeted the billions in infrastructure dollars for cities in the federal budget announced Tuesday, municipal officials are still trying to determine just how the money will be dispensed.

It is unclear to what degree matching funds from the provinces and cities will be required, whether money will be distributed on a per capita basis or through applications, and exactly what kind of projects will be eligible.

Second, employment insurance. With the mounting job losses, more Canadians will face the prospect of applying for employment insurance for the first time. While the budget provides some additional funds for skills training and extends employment insurance benefits for an additional five weeks, many unemployed Canadians are ineligible because they work on contract, part time or in seasonal jobs that do not last long enough for them to qualify.

*Government Orders*

The problem is most acute in Ontario where the unemployment rate has now jumped to 8% versus 7.2% nationally. Unemployed Ontarians each receive an average of \$4,600 less than those out of work in the rest of Canada. EI coverage rates are 43% for Canada and only 30%, or three in ten, for Ontario and even less in the greater Toronto area at only 22%.

With the five week extension, a worker in Mississauga must work 630 hours to qualify for a maximum of 45 weeks worth of employment insurance, whereas a worker in Regina or Winnipeg would only need to work 420 hours to get up to 50 weeks of employment insurance. This is unfair and must be addressed.

The government should reduce or eliminate the two week waiting period. It must also work to significantly reduce and standardize the number of hours of work needed to qualify for EI benefits, either permanently or for the duration of the recession. Those who have contributed to the EI system deserve to have access to it in their moment of need.

Third, social housing. The lack of availability and a high demand for affordable housing exists in Mississauga. The investments allocated in the budget are a good first step. However, within the region of Peel, there is a list of 13,500 households eligible and waiting for social housing, including more than 7,500 families, 2,200 seniors and 3,600 singles. Subsidized housing units typically have a low turnover rate and wait times for new applicants are in excess of 21 years for families and singles. Seniors and special priority applicants are waiting up to seven years. Those on the wait list represent the most vulnerable segment of our population: those at risk of becoming homeless if they do not get assistance soon.

Fourth, universal childcare. Women in Mississauga—Streetsville continue to ask me to advocate on behalf of an affordable universal childcare program. However, universal childcare is not a women's issue or even a family issue, for that matter. It is an economic issue. Allowing women the option of leaving their children in a safe, regulated environment so they can seek skills training or employment must continue to be a priority for all levels of government. Not surprisingly, the United Nations reported Canada dead last among developed nations when it comes to providing affordable quality day care.

Finally, job stimulus for women. The government has shown contempt for women in this budget. I use the word "contempt" because it has callously cancelled pay equity for women that provides a level playing field for employees of every gender. The government has not included a single job creation incentive for women and has ignored the plight that females in the workforce face each day. The stimulus package is largely infrastructure spending, leading to a multitude of construction industry jobs, while so-called pink collar jobs that are predominantly filled by women are ignored.

The Conservative government has shown a lack of respect for Canadians. In this time of economic crisis, it has turned its back, opting to play political games rather than providing assistance to those who need it most. It was the Liberal Party that stood up for Canadians, as it always has. Through tough opposition, we have held the government to account and forced it to take action.

Although this budget lacks clarity, it does contain some measures that we believe can help Canadians in the short term. We support the budget because Canadians expect us to be responsible. By putting the government on probation, we have stood up for Canadians so they can get the help they deserve.

● (1240)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is interesting that my colleague runs down the budget in such context and then supports it later. I would like to focus on that in terms of the Liberal strategy of putting the government on probation with the amendment which does not have teeth to it. I am wondering what the tipping point is.

The Conservatives have already said "no" to many of the things that the member complained about. They were very explicit with regard to employment insurance. They already said "no" to doing what the member is correct in asserting, especially in regions of Ontario and the GTA that are hurting with regard to employment insurance. Eliminating the two week waiting period as well as making it more uniform with regard to qualifications, the Conservatives have already said "no" to those things. They have explicitly said we are not getting those changes.

What is going to be the motivation over the next few months to have the Conservatives change that position when they have already said "no"? Could the member tell us how the Liberals could make some of these things happen when the Conservatives have been quite clear in saying "no" and the Liberals are giving them the ability to do so?

● (1245)

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Madam Speaker, at least we read it before we said "no". The important issue here is that Canadians who need the money get the funding they need. Individuals and sectors across the country, whether it be the automotive sector, the manufacturing sector, or fisheries and forestry, must get the money they need to jump-start this economy once again. We need to get people working as soon as possible.

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I would like to compliment my friend on her very worthy contribution to this debate. She has described the fact that the budget obviously is far from perfect, but is necessary at this stage and that Canadians cannot afford a \$300 million election right now. They need the economic stimulus help. I am wondering if she could provide any examples from her riding specifically showing why the situation is so urgent, why this has to pass and why people need assistance.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Madam Speaker, in fact I do have a number of examples in Mississauga. We have had the following announcements in recent months. PPG, an automotive paint finishing company, announced it is closing its plant and moving 150 jobs to an existing plant in the U.S. AstraZeneca is relocating its sterile manufacturing mine. That is 200 jobs to a plant in New Jersey. Kingsway Financial announced 162 job losses. GPX closed production and is relocating to the U.S. as well. CPI Plastics is in receivership as is Skd. Hitachi as well is moving one of its lines to another location at another plant.

*Government Orders*

I received this very compelling letter from a constituent this morning. It reads:

I am in turn asking for your assistance. I have just been laid off from my job. My wife is also without work. We have 4 boys, ages 12-21, and are experiencing considerable financial hardship. We have owned our home in Streetsville for 20 years and do not want to lose it. Our line of credit, credit card bills and utility bills are going unpaid. I know that this may be a common occurrence these days, but it's one that I haven't previously encountered to this degree.

Number 1, I need a job, as does my wife. In the meantime we also need some kind of social net to help us in these trying times until I get another job. Can you help us?

That is why the Liberals are going to support the budget.

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Madam Speaker, with regard to the companies just mentioned, some of them are in the automotive sector. I would like to know why the member would support a budget that does not have an auto strategy, including implementation of the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council recommendations, which has called for a strategy since 2004. The budget does not have that. As well, it does not address the fact that the United States has put \$25 billion aside in low interest loans and additional money for the parts industry. This budget has not matched any of that.

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie:** Madam Speaker, as I have already reiterated to the member, we are supporting the budget for a number of reasons including the fact that the money will get into the hands of the people who need it most. There have been enhanced employment insurance benefits with five weeks on the end of a claim. There will be enhanced skills training opportunities and enhanced job training opportunities. We are working with banks to ensure that they are loosening up lines of credit. Hopefully, infrastructure funding will be flowing, as will targeted funding to the different sectors in the economy.

• (1250)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin my statement by addressing yesterday's announcement by Xstrata Nickel that it would be laying off 686 permanent workers in Sudbury.

In July 2006, as part of Swiss-based Xstrata's takeover of Canadian owned Falconbridge mines, the company made a commitment to the Minister of Industry that it would not lay off a single Canadian worker for at least three years. Neither Xstrata nor the Minister of Industry dispute this agreement. In fact, a copy of the agreement can still be found on Xstrata's website.

Yesterday, when the hon. member for Sudbury and I asked the Minister of Industry if he was going to stand up for Sudbury and put an end to Xstrata's layoffs, we received a less than adequate answer. The Minister of Industry made comments regarding commitments to continue the operation of nickel rim by Xstrata. This is of small comfort to the hundreds of families who have found themselves with a pink slip instead of a paycheque this week.

For every job in the mining sector there are at least four spinoff jobs within the local economy that are lost. These layoffs will be devastating to the communities in Nickel Belt and greater Sudbury.

When a foreign company takes over a Canadian company certain commitments are made. These companies must be held accountable by the Government of Canada. What good are rules when they are not being enforced? What is to stop other foreign companies from renegeing on their commitments? The government has set a

dangerous precedent and Canadian workers will be the ones to suffer.

In the government's budget implementation bill, the government has set out to loosen foreign ownership legislation by amending the Canada Transportation Act. It would increase maximum foreign ownership levels by a whopping 49%. In this economic recession we need to protect Canadian companies from aggressive foreign takeovers.

As I was reading through Bill C-10, page after page, I became more and more shocked. Each new announcement was more meanspirited than the first. The Conservatives have held nothing back. As soon as they secured Liberal support, they filled the implementation bill with attacks on pay equity, the environment, collective agreements, debt burdened students, and employment insurance pilot programs.

I urge members of the Liberal Party to carefully read the full 551 pages, or at least the summary of the bill, before supporting it. I think many of them would be surprised to see what their leader is more than happy to let slide in order to prop up the neo-conservative agenda.

Under the guise of modernizing pay equity programs, the government is removing the rights of public sector workers from making pay equity complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. For decades, Canada has been moving forward on recognizing the rights of oppressed groups and now, with these measures, we are moving backward. Shame.

Women in traditionally female positions have been fighting to have pay equity recognized. They have educated employers, the government, and the public about the need for equal pay for work of equal value. The government is simply being meanspirited by going after this group of workers whose contributions are undervalued.

Next, the government has set out to allow certain projects to be approved without completing a thorough environmental assessment. Again, the government is using the guise that this will speed up infrastructure spending.

If the government was serious about speeding up infrastructure spending, it would abandon the flawed building Canada fund that requires municipalities and provinces to seek out private investments and match federal dollars. The municipality of greater Sudbury has a growing infrastructure deficit of \$480 million.

Many municipalities are uneasy, and rightfully so, about partnering with private, profit-driven companies to build public infrastructure, like water treatment plants. Greater Sudbury has planned a Levack water treatment centre, but has been unable to secure adequate funding. This project is shovel-ready and legally must be completed. This water treatment centre is greatly needed in my riding of Nickel Belt.

*Government Orders*

A much more efficient and direct way for the government to invest in shovel-ready projects would be through increasing the direct gas tax transfer to municipalities. We have heard from municipalities throughout the country how appreciated this transfer has been. This transfer was secured through the negotiations of the 2005 NDP-Liberal budget.

● (1255)

This budget implementation bill goes after debt burdened students. I am not sure why the government has decided to go in this direction. There is no logic to it. Students and recent graduates are going to be the drivers of our new economy. As a country we should be encouraging post-secondary education. There are no measures to relieve students. The minister will only provide debt relief should a student die or disappear. I am sure students struggling to make student loan payments will be thrilled to learn this. This is truly shameful.

Could the government not provide more significantly relief for student loans especially during an economic recession? The government bailed out the banks that administer the loans. Surely, it can spare more than crumbs for our students.

One area in which I have several questions for the minister is in regional economic development. The government has announced in its budget the creation of the southern Ontario economic development agency which is expected to receive \$1 billion over the next five years. The New Democrats campaigned on the creation of such an agency and we are pleased that it is included in the budget. My questions concerns FedNor and how it will be impacted by this new agency for southern Ontario? Will any of the workers employed by FedNor be laid off or transferred to the south as a result of this newly created agency? Will SODA be an independent economic agency or one that is hidden under many layers within the Department of Industry like FedNor? Will any of the infrastructure funding within the budget be administered through FedNor and will the application process be streamlined in response to the unprecedented need in northern Ontario for infrastructure projects?

During this recession the government has an opportunity to make FedNor a fully funded independent economic development agency similar to ACOA. This would increase its funding and mandate. Then maybe worthy projects like the centre for excellence in mining innovation and the long-term care facility in Chelmsford would finally receive the funding they deserve. Now is the time to make these changes.

The last issue I want to raise is the employment insurance program. The employment insurance program can be a great economic stabilizer. Unfortunately, after a decade of Liberal gutting of the program only 40% of workers can qualify for employment insurance benefits despite paying into the insurance policy for years.

The Conservatives had an opportunity in the budget to broaden the employment insurance program to help absorb some of the fallout from the economic recession. Instead, not one additional worker will become eligible for benefits despite a record 7.2% unemployment rate across the country.

Laid off workers will still need to wait two weeks before they become eligible for benefits. The government should know that the

hydro bills and mortgage payments will not wait two weeks. Instead of treating laid off workers with dignity, the government has insulted them by refusing to reform the employment insurance program for fear that it may become lucrative for individuals to stay home and not look for work. Shame.

The government has also ended a pilot project that was examining the effects of extending benefits. I am not sure why it would do this except to punish laid off workers and their families.

Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, goes well beyond the budget and sneaks through the backdoor to bring neo-conservative measures that have nothing to do with stimulating the economy. The government and the Liberal Party should be ashamed of its contents. The attacks on women, students, workers and the environment have gone too far.

This bill is just another reason why we in the NDP caucus have lost confidence in the Conservatives.

The Liberals have given the Conservatives the very blank cheque Canadian voters refused to give them in October. The Liberals have sold out Canadians and their families in exchange for propping up the Conservatives. This budget fails to protect the vulnerable, safeguard the jobs of today or create the jobs of tomorrow.

As part of the real, effective New Democratic opposition I will be voting against this bill.

● (1300)

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am perplexed. As a northern Ontario member of Parliament that is certainly not what we heard in our riding and it is not what we heard in other parts of northern Ontario that go as far as the borders of the hon. member's riding. I guess if he had spent some time looking through the economic plan he would have noticed that FedNor in fact has never been stronger and more invested in by the government. Is it true, with respect to the building Canada fund, that his constituents and stakeholders are saying that building infrastructure in northern Canada and for that matter in Canada is a bad thing?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Madam Speaker, I am also perplexed as to why the member for Kenora does not understand the budget. I do not think he has read it.

There are obviously a lot of projects in northern Ontario that are shovel ready and would create employment. For example, in my riding there is the long-term care facility in Chelmsford which would create 160 permanent jobs. FedNor is not funding that project. There is the water treatment plant in Levack which I spoke about. It is ready to go.

The Conservative government wants the municipalities to get funding from private agencies. In these economic times, private agencies are not funding these projects. These projects are so important they should not be funded by private companies.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am glad the member raised the concern about the projects. Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer, when he was before the finance committee on February 5, according to the answer from the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, reported that the government has experienced significant delays in delivering funds related to planned infrastructure. For example, in 2007-08, the last year for which data is available, Infrastructure Canada lapsed 50%, \$1.1 billion of the \$2.3 billion in its non-gas tax related funding. Lapsed in government jargon means promised but not spent.

My concern is that we have the same situation for the current fiscal year, 2008-09. There are approved infrastructure programs and funds are ready to go, but they have not been delivered to the municipalities.

Does the member have any idea why the government does not want that money to flow in the current fiscal year? Does it have anything to do with trying to make the current fiscal year look a little better than it really is?

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I cannot answer the question as to why the government is delaying the funding of these projects, but maybe because of the Liberal-Conservative coalition the hon. member from the Liberal Party could ask the Conservative government. After all, the Liberals are supporting the Conservatives, which is something I just cannot understand. I just cannot believe the Liberals would attack the budget and then stand up and support it.

Maybe the member from the Liberal caucus could ask the coalition government why the funds are not flowing to the municipalities that need them. They need the funds now.

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I understand the member for Nickel Belt has several projects in his riding that are shovel ready and are very important to his riding. I am really interested to know why the member would not support the budget with the infrastructure funding the government is providing in the economic action plan. Why would the member not support the budget? Maybe he should stand up for his constituents and support the budget.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle:** Madam Speaker, we are not supporting the budget because of the past history of the Conservative government. In the past, the Conservatives have promised funds to the municipalities and have not delivered the funds. We do not expect the Conservatives to deliver the funds. There are other reasons, such as pay equity for women. The budget attacks women and in attacking women, the government is also attacking children. The budget attacks foreign ownership. It attacks students.

• (1305)

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the budget implementation bill, a bill which for all intents and purposes summarizes the budget.

If the budget had been tabled a few weeks ago, it would have been one of the biggest compilations of misleading figures ever to be referenced in this chamber. Why do I say that? Let us go back to last year's budget, tabled only nine months ago, with a projected surplus of \$2.3 billion for 2007-08. When the finance minister was questioned on this number, he repeatedly said that Canada's fiscal

foundation was solid and that we would not see a deficit this year or even next. He stood by his numbers and statements in spite of the fact that most reputable economists were saying that the minister's projections were dubious at best.

We all remember the 2008 election campaign ad in which the Prime Minister pulled on a sweater vest, looked into the camera and paraphrased George Bush and John McCain in telling us that the economic fundamentals of this country were strong, which implied that Canadians need not worry about the global economic crisis that was quickly approaching our shores, and that to this day, the course attitude was the correct course of action.

What the Prime Minister did not explain to Canadians during the election campaign was that while our economy was on solid footing thanks to 13 years of strong Liberal stewardship, only three years of Conservative rule emptied the government coffers at a time when the sheer enormity of the economic crisis that began in the U.S. would hit Canada and the government would have to react.

While the Prime Minister was extolling the virtues of inaction to appear strong and win an election, our economy was losing jobs and slowing to a crawl.

We Liberals repeatedly questioned the finance minister and the Prime Minister for over a year as to why they had not included a contingency reserve for economic downturns in their projections. They must have thought the request came from outer space, because the finance minister and the Conservatives claim that contingency reserves for economic downturns were only necessary when they were cooking the books. Well, the minister did not just cook the books, he threw them directly into the fire.

I even questioned the Conservatives' lack of a contingency fund due to the fact that in their own 2008 budget documents the government provided a table indicating that for each 1% decline in GDP growth, it would result in a direct hit of \$3.3 billion to government revenues.

In June 2008, only three months after the tabling of the budget, the Governor of the Bank of Canada had already predicted a substantial decline in GDP growth.

[*Translation*]

Why mention this? Well, given the inaccuracy of the finance minister's figures last year, we have to question whether we can trust them this year. The question is an honest one. Unfortunately the only response by the minister was to deplore the rate at which the economy changed.

Had he taken the trouble to listen to the Bank of Canada and the Liberal Party last year, he would have known that an economic downturn was in the wings and that a contingency reserve in the budget would have given him more manoeuvring room to protect Canadians' jobs, investments and pension plans.

*Government Orders*

The minister cannot say he was not warned. In addition, when he and the Prime Minister say they are concerned about the current state of the economy, I can only conclude that they are demonstrating bad faith, incompetence or the inability to listen.

Only a few months ago, during the election campaign, the Conservative members spoke up to defend the government's figures and to say that the economic crisis would have no impact on Canada. The Prime Minister went so far as to tell Canadians to take advantage of the deals on the investment market. What is more, barely a few weeks ago, in an economic update, when the government should have provided the latest figures and adjusted its sights, it continued to refuse to recognize the facts.

[*English*]

Now I turn to this year's budget and the question becomes, how can we not support a budget that spends \$60 billion over two years at a time when stimulus is needed? The problem with the budget is that the Conservatives cannot stop themselves from grandstanding simply because it is good politics.

However, when we look at the budget in detail, we see that the Conservatives are providing every man, woman and child with an additional debt burden of \$1,000 each. In the case of my family, the Prime Minister is borrowing \$4,000 on my family's back and is giving us back less than \$500. Some families who earn less money are getting back less than \$300. Good politics, bad policy; this is the story of the Conservative government over and over again.

• (1310)

[*Translation*]

What about return on investment in the case of services Canadians will enjoy? This is a different kettle of fish, because a conservative generally opposes this kind of spending. So, in order not to offend voters, who want good services and expect to benefit from them, spending must definitely not assist or support social programs.

The Conservatives have cut taxes, but have done so without a plan. They took symbolic action on behalf of workers and those having difficulty making ends meet instead of improving the income tax system to better suit the needs of a modern economy. They opted for the easy way out by putting forward a whole slew of clever tricks intended to do nothing more than fill the pockets of their supporters while running up the country's debt.

Governments must keep some funds in reserve in order to provide services. However, as the Conservatives do not believe in services, why bother with issues so annoying as retaining surpluses, when it is easier just to buy votes?

And there is worse. When the Prime Minister realized that he had emptied the piggy bank and the polls were still not giving him the majority he so coveted, he plunged into a spending frenzy, flinging a fistful of dollars wherever he thought he might be able to buy votes. There was no considered planning here. Pleasing came first and foremost. The result was fewer food inspectors to protect Canadians, crumbling nuclear facilities, failure to use infrastructure investment funds and the loss of Canadians' savings.

[*English*]

The problem is that we have reached a point where action must be taken immediately. Stimulus is needed and bickering among ourselves is petty and counterproductive.

This budget proposes \$60 billion in stimulus over the next two years, which is a significant amount. I do not like how all of it is being spent and I do not agree with every line item in the budget, but I think it is a fair compromise. The Prime Minister has been given a chance by the Liberal Party to clean up this mess, but we will be watching. The Conservatives have one last chance. We are doing this for the sake of Canadians and in order to restore some sanity to this Parliament.

There will be the usual complaints from the NDP members that the spending in this budget does not go far enough, but I have come to expect that from them because, to them, too much is never enough. Our choices are simple. We could hold up the business of this chamber indefinitely by trying to get our way on everything; we could bring down the government, which would hold up business once again as a coalition is formed or an election runs its course; or, we could get down to business and propose reasonable amendments to the budget that demand nothing more than what is manageable at this time of economic crisis.

It is a minority government, so we will hold it accountable. The money the Conservatives are spending is my money, everyone's money, money that belongs to all Canadians. Now that we are satisfied with the overall direction of this budget, we Liberals only want to address the Prime Minister's credibility problem. There will be no more double-talk. The budget is a binding set of policy proposals which the government must implement effectively and in good faith. The Liberal Party will support this budget on the condition that the three fixed dates for the government to report to Parliament to review the government's performance in implementing the budget is respected. We will test the government on how it implements the budget, how transparent the process is and how the Canadian economy is reacting to the budget. Failure in any of these categories will result in the loss of confidence in the government.

The Prime Minister has to answer to Parliament and I am glad to say that my leader is now the head coach. No more tricks, no more deception; the rules are simple: listen to the coach, produce results, or get benched.

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I think my colleague and the House would agree that the government has come a long way since the budget update, which was presented in the House a few months ago. It does not seem that long ago, but it is.

I listened last night, and I am sure other members did as well, to President Obama. He talked about the emergency nature of the global crisis in which we have found ourselves. The member has balanced his comments against that reality and has indicated the emergency nature of it and why we must respond on behalf of Canadians.

*Government Orders*

I know the member comes from an urban community in Montreal, similar to Toronto. The Toronto mayor has talked very positively, on the one hand, about the many benefits and multipliers that come from the infrastructure and the investment in our social capital, the people.

Is the member satisfied, on the basis of the experience of Montreal, Toronto and urban communities across the country, that the cost-sharing arrangements as put forward can be met by municipalities? If they cannot be met, and we have heard that some cannot, then the stimulus possibilities will be negated and held back.

Has the member given any consideration to a concept that, through CMHC, municipalities that need their one-third share could borrow it and in good times start to pay it back, the kind of accounting process that would allow municipalities to add and take up the opportunities in the stimulus package?

• (1315)

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Madam Speaker, the member for York South—Weston has become a good friend and is a very hard-working member of Parliament.

If I take the required time I need to try to answer his question, I will not have enough time, so I will try to address part of the question by looking at it from the Montreal point of view.

I know the city of Montreal has challenges in terms of its many projects. I had a meeting with the local borough mayor and he provided me a list of all the projects that were ready to go tomorrow. Part of the problem is finding adequate funding. There are all kinds of projects, whether it is construction of parks, or rinks or the renovation of community centres. Some roads need to be restructured so traffic flows more easily in certain parts of my riding that have traffic problems. There are all kinds of needs.

There are enough projects ready to go. The question is whether there is enough money. This is the challenge the mayor faces. He knows he has to deal with the Quebec government as well as the municipalities. Is there an openness? We have to look at the bill, but we have to get to work on it. I am a member of the finance committee, which will study the bill and amend it, if need be, so we can get the money flowing.

The secret is not to tie up the money, but to get the money flowing. Whether the bureaucrats are holding it up or there is lack of funding, we have to find a way to make these funds available. Whether it is to have municipalities borrow extra money or have private industry come in, we need to get these shovel ready projects off the ground. Although I speak for my municipality and city, we hear the same from not only across the country but from across the globe.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ)** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Bill C-10 implementing the Conservative government's budget.

A number of hon. members have already voiced their opinions on the budget and have raised a number of concerns on various questions. With the budget implementation bill, the Conservative government wants us to approve the changes in equalization

payments to the Government of Quebec set out in the budget, which would mean a loss of \$1 billion by Quebec in the first year alone, and perhaps even \$2 billion in the second. What is more, the budget implementation bill lays the foundation for the creation of a pan-Canadian securities commission, to which the Quebec National Assembly is opposed.

As well, there will be more unemployed people in the coming months. The bill offers no reforms of any kind regarding accessibility to EI nor does it abolish the waiting period. Worse still, the Conservative government is proposing lower taxes for individuals with high incomes, but in no way does it propose a true economic recovery plan.

The budget also proposes eliminating one provision of the Income Tax Act that prevents companies from using tax havens to avoid paying taxes. This means that the government is encouraging companies to go outside Quebec and Canada for purposes of tax evasion.

The budget also opens the door to deregulation of foreign investment, which is liable to favour foreign takeovers and does not take the economic interests of Quebec and Canada into consideration. As for the funds allocated by the budget to social housing, they are poorly distributed because their targets are unclear, as evidenced by the community development trust. Finally, by imposing working conditions on employees, the bill ignores public sector salary negotiations and agreements.

For the Bloc Québécois, respecting collective agreements is of vital importance. Similarly, the budget has totally ignored a whole series of items of the utmost priority to numerous Quebecers. Worse yet, the Conservative government has introduced an ideological budget, with no concern for its minority position.

Last October, Quebecers asked us to continue our work here in the House of Commons, to represent them and to defend their interests and values here in Ottawa. They are worried about this budget.

In particular regard to the situation faced by the people in my region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, the Conservative government has completely missed the boat. There are no promises to improve employment insurance or set up a program to help older workers. The forestry industry is getting only a few crumbs to deal with the ongoing crisis.

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to speak once again about the plight of the forestry sector in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. For years now, I have been constantly raising the awareness of the members of the House about the difficult situation facing forestry workers. Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is one of the biggest forestry regions in Quebec covering 85,688 km<sup>2</sup>, which is 17% of the entire Quebec forest. More specifically, 23 of the 49 municipalities in my region depend on the forest economy and qualify as single-industry communities.

*Government Orders*

In all, more than a third of the jobs in the manufacturing sector are related to forestry. Several sawmills in the riding of the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) and hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean have ceased production. This is the case of Louisiana Pacific Canada Ltd. in Chambord, which closed down for two years and Arbec, which closed its sawmill. Several other companies are continuing with reduced workforces.

• (1320)

For many communities in my region and riding, the economic crisis arrived several years ago. However, the budget provides only a scant \$170 million for the entire country, including Quebec, to come to the assistance of this hard hit industry.

The forestry crisis afflicting Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and several other areas of Quebec is far from being resolved. Many people predict that 2009 will be even more difficult than the last few years. Ever since 2006, the Conservative government has left the forestry industry to its own devices, endangering thousands of jobs. The budget tabled by the Conservatives does nothing to correct the situation, even though the Bloc Québécois has suggested some solutions that would really do something to help this industry.

First, the government should restore the forest economy diversification fund. When the previous minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec axed the \$50 million diversification fund for regions affected by the crisis in the forestry industry, he really dealt it a hard blow. This program made it possible to assist the affected communities and the working people in the plants. It was clearly a mistake to cut this assistance. The government could have taken advantage of the budget to announce that it was going to reinstate this program with additional financial resources.

Second, the Bloc Québécois has proposed that a loan and loan guarantee program be created to help finance investments in production equipment. This would provide support for businesses that wish to update their production equipment or simply enable their businesses to expand. Once again, this measure is not included in the Conservative budget.

Third, the Bloc has suggested giving tax credits to companies in the manufacturing and forestry sectors to help them develop new technologies and to encourage hiring. Sadly, there is no such measure in the budget.

Lastly, the Bloc has for several years been calling for an income support program for older workers. These workers are in a state of despair because there has been no assistance for them. Entire communities are being affected by these lost earnings. The Government of Quebec has made efforts to help older workers, but those efforts will be inadequate as long as Ottawa does not do its part.

Employees over 55 have a hard time retraining. That is a fact. They are not getting the help they need. Yet this program would cost only \$75 million a year for the entire country.

These four measures are aimed at helping the forest industry make the transition toward secondary and tertiary processing and promoting the use of wood in commercial and public buildings.

This transition would lead to high value added manufacturing and make sure that every tree provides more jobs. This would increase the demand for wood on the domestic market in Quebec and Canada and reduce wood exports.

In closing, the Conservative government's ideological budget shows how little it cares about the 21,000 jobs that have been lost in the forest industry in Quebec since April 1, 2005, including nearly 4,000 jobs just in my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

• (1325)

[English]

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I have spent a lot of time in the Péribonka area, pursuing beautiful ouananiche, and I hope to get back there soon.

I have two blunt questions for the hon. member.

First, could he explain why the Conservative government seems to have abandoned the forestry industry across Canada, as well as in his area, and why it seems to feel that this industry is not worth investing in any more and that we should just let it die?

Second, could he speculate as to why the Liberals seem to have joined the Conservatives in this propping up of the budget, rubber stamping it and allowing our forestry industry, one of the most important industries in the history of Canada, to decline?

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Madam Speaker, in response to his question about why the government abandoned the forestry industry, I would say that this government made ideological choices. It said—I am speaking for Quebec—that it was not going to help the forestry industry because that was an issue for certain regions, but that it was going to help the auto industry and certain other industries at the expense of the forestry industry.

Quebeckers should have received more than just a share of the \$170 million over two years for all of Canada, including Quebec. Quebeckers account for 30% of the labour force, and that money is going to be distributed per capita. That is a great injustice that simply should not be.

Now I will answer the question about why the Liberals are supporting the budget. Like the Conservatives, the Liberals were asked to help the forestry industry and the softwood lumber industry. Let us not forget that, at the beginning of the crisis, which started a few years ago, they, like the Conservatives, failed to help the forestry industry.

• (1330)

[English]

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I could not hesitate to correct the record on something that was so blatantly misleading regarding the softwood lumber industry and the whole lumber sector.



*Government Orders*

It is this Conservative government that ensured that the \$5 billion for the softwood lumber agreement were returned to Canada. It is this government that has maintained the funding for pine beetle extrication. It is this government that put a stimulus into the budget of 15% so that people would actually participate in renovating their houses, which would primarily go to the forestry industry by way of the lumber.

I just wanted to ensure the record was corrected and ask the hon. member why he would misrepresent the case with the forestry industry.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has about one minute to respond.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard:** Madam Speaker, with respect to what really happened with the forestry industry, members will recall the outcome of the softwood lumber crisis of a few years ago: we gave the Americans a billion dollars.

Yes, the softwood lumber industry was at the end of its rope. Industry representatives asked us to support the measure even though we ended up giving the Americans a billion dollars. However, we always called for loan guarantees, regardless of whether the Liberals or the Conservatives were in power. If those governments had offered loan guarantees to companies in the forestry industry or to sawmills, they would have been responding to a need. Those demands are still on the table. Both the forestry industry and the mills still want the same thing as before.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in the past I have made a statement to the effect that the measure of a country's success is not an economic measure but rather a measure of the health and the well-being of its people. I believe that is the important issue in this budget and that, in this time of our country's financial duress, we need to keep our eye on the condition of our people, particularly the most vulnerable.

We bandied the term accountability around quite a bit so I thought the members would be interested to hear my definition of accountability. To me, it means to be able to explain and justify one's actions or decisions in a manner that is true, full and plain. That is a high mark for almost anyone to hit, but today, in this time of financial duress, it is time for our parliamentarians to step up to the level of accountability so that all Canadians have hope for tomorrow and for the future, rather than fear.

We need to deliver that hope, which is why this Parliament is sitting now and why many members have lamented that the House's business was disrupted by prorogation and by a fairy-tale November economic statement that was clearly not true, full and plain and did not reflect the reality.

Another election was not in the best interests of the people. It was a partisan issue and that is why the opposition stepped forward after that economic statement which was unacceptable not only to the opposition parties but to Canadians as a whole.

● (1335)

The economic statement was very rosy. It projected surpluses throughout the five year period when all the private sector economists and all the pundits who had looked at the fundamentals knew that the country was facing some serious problems.

That is one of the reasons that an amendment was proposed to the budget and why it was adopted by the government. It is important to understand that the principles of protecting the most vulnerable in our society, those who are unable to help themselves, had to be included in the budget.

Unfortunately, I have heard far too often in this place that we would rather people just kept the money in their pockets rather than paying taxes to the government. What the budget does not take into account is that there are people in our society who are unable to care for themselves. They do not have the means and they do not pay taxes but they do need the government to assist them, whether it be a social safety net or with the goods and services that they need to sustain themselves.

That one proviso in the amendment protects the most vulnerable in our society and the growing vulnerable, those who will lose their jobs. Some 230,000 Canadians have already lost their jobs, more than are projected to be created by the budget.

The second two issues concern jobs. The challenge right now is jobs. The measure of success of the budget will include our performance on the job side: saving existing jobs or reducing the job loss in existing businesses and industry, as well as creating new jobs in the emerging and highest probability areas where new jobs may be created.

Finally, it is with regard to a plan for getting out of deficits. It is unfortunate that the government has squandered, through its reckless spending and fiscal imprudence, a \$14 billion annual surplus that it inherited in 2006. It is gone.

I wrote down a few things that reminded me of the things that paint a picture of what the Conservative government has presented to Canadians since it took office in 2006. I remember statements by the Prime Minister about the cultural industry. He said that it was a subsidized whiner. When does a prime minister use that kind of language?

The first thing the Conservatives did in forming government was to develop a 200-page binder on how to make committees dysfunctional, which they were successful in doing in a couple of cases, the procedure and House affairs committee, as well as the justice committee.

The government taxed income trusts when it promised not to do that. The \$25 billion of wealth, particularly of retirees, was wiped out. A 31.5% punitive tax is still there. It should be gone and replaced with something that protects Canadian investors. The government passes it on to offshore investors who are the ones getting the most benefit from income trusts.

*Government Orders*

The government sued the former leader of the opposition over the Cadman issue. It voted non-confidence in Elections Canada. It broke its own legislation on fixed election dates. Our election was not supposed to be last October 14. It was supposed to be October 19, 2009. Why was the legislation broken? It was broken because the Prime Minister thought Parliament was being dysfunctional so he called an election.

When the Prime Minister gave a speech on that bill he said that no prime minister would ever be able to use partisan objectives for calling an election, that every Canadian would know the election date. It did not happen. The legislation was broken and it was the government's own legislation. Go figure. It is amazing that it had to happen.

Everything that the government brought forward was made a confidence vote. It meant that if those legislative measures were defeated we would go into an election. How is it that everything is a confidence vote? It was politically motivated. The government was trying to take advantage of the political vulnerability of other parties. That is not the way to put the interests of the people ahead of partisan interests. It is quite the reverse and yet the government purports quite the opposite.

I could go on but I think people get the idea of where we are now.

Where are we today? Stock evaluations are low. Markets are down about 40%. Emerging markets have lost about 60% of their value. Notwithstanding the Prime Minister's assertions that our banks are strong, the credit crisis exists in Canada and the government itself is coming forward to take some of the pressure off by taking over asset backed mortgages.

Housing is not only stalled but prices have plummeted. Bankruptcies are up 50% year over year. We now have 230,000 jobs lost, more than the 189,000 that the budget purports to create.

• (1340)

Eighty percent of our trade was with the U.S. but now the protectionist rhetoric has put us on our heels again. The auto industry has been crushed. The forestry industry is dwindling. The shipbuilding industry is virtually dead. It paints a picture that Tory times are tough times, and that is the reality. With all of the signs of the past year, the government insists that the problem is elsewhere, that it is the U.S. and that we are strong and everything is fine.

That is not the case. When one is a trading nation and the other nations it trades with, particularly the United States, are in difficulty, the nation needs to recognize that fact and bring it into the reality of its fiscal management, policies and the way in which it governs.

In December, the Prime Minister said that there would not be a recession in Canada and that we were fine as long as we did not do "stupid" things like running a deficit. Look at where we are now.

In October, he suggested that the market represented some good buying opportunities for Canadians. The stock market has gone down a further 20% since he said that. In November, the government's failed economic statement promised us surpluses for the next five years. Twelve days later, the Bank of Canada announced that we were in a recession. In December, the Prime Minister admitted that the government would run a deficit of \$20

billion to \$30 billion. In January that was amended to say that it was closer to \$40 billion. Once budget 2009 was tabled, we saw that the government was running a deficit even in the current fiscal year of 2008-09.

It goes back to the issues of accountability, credibility, being truthful, plain and honest with Canadians, not to create fear but to say that we understand what is happening. My concern is not so much about the economic measures and numbers but more about the condition of the people. I do know that when people lose their jobs and problems occur in a financial sense, it creates stress, depression, desperation and bad things happen. It affects a person's mental and physical health and it affects their families and interactions. It means that the cost of health care and social services programs will go up. It also means, as was shown in the 1990 recession, that there is a very positive tracking between the level of unemployment and the level of crime. I hate to say this but it shows that there will be a level of crime. It will mostly be property crime because people are desperate.

Many of those costs will be borne by the provinces but they have had no increase in terms of transfers to the provinces to deal with these inevitable areas. The government has not seen it far enough. On page 219 of the budget bill, members will see the government's minuscule plan to return to surplus. It is simply, "We hope".

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the last part of the member's address dealt with closing the accountability loop. He became more precise when he talked about the social interconnection between high unemployment and the trauma that Canadians would be facing, issues related to criminal activity and other activities in response.

I wonder if the member, who has had a great deal of experience through his membership on the public accounts committee and certainly from having been in this House a long time, could give the House some insight into how he sees the ongoing monitoring of expenditures under the stimulus package, particularly in the social programs that he talked about. I wonder if he could give us an idea as to how that could be linked to the invitation that the government appears to have put out, which is that if the stimulus package does not work it is prepared to reinvest or find other mechanisms that would come to grips with stimulating the kinds of programs that would meet the kinds of issues to which the member has alluded.

• (1345)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Madam Speaker, the experience that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has had, in looking at the last reported year 2007-08, has to do with rolling out money. Indeed, in 2007-08, with regard to the infrastructure investments, for example, only half of the money actually went out. Some \$2.2 billion never went out. It lapsed. It meant that it was promised but not spent.

What I and, I think, the member are concerned about is the government saying that it will do things but never gets the money out there.

*Government Orders*

With regard to the social side, the budget does not address the concerns that the member has articulated. It means that this budget is not a finishing point for me. It must be a starting point. We need to change some things down the road. I hope the monitoring mechanisms, to which the member referred, the quarterly reporting and the work of the chair of the government operations and estimates committee, will bring to Parliament the evidence necessary to show that Canadians are being served in the areas that help those most in need.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague is rising again—like all the other Liberals before him and like those who will come after him—to tell us that it is not a good budget. Each one of them will present an argument on a specific subject and will make comments such as: this budget does not live up to their promises; it is too little, too late; there is an obvious lack of transparency; that it is a fairy tale; that it takes a partisan approach; and that those who will suffer are ignored by this budget.

If my colleague, and all the other Liberals, truly believes what he says why is he going to vote for this budget?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Madam Speaker, if this were simply a partisan issue, I would vote against the budget because it is not as good as it could be and should be.

We have already had some false starts. In the economic statement back in November it was clear the government was going in the wrong direction. The member is well aware that the opposition parties came forward with the conditions under which the government should come back with another budget and deal with matters such as the stimulus for infrastructure and for job growth and job protection, as well as for dealing with the vulnerable, dealing with EI. We asked for those things. They are now here. It is not a perfect budget.

The member, all hon. members and Canadians ought to ask themselves if they really think that going back to the electorate, having another \$300 million election and putting Parliament out of work for another two or three months would be in the best interests of the people. I and I think most hon. members in the Liberal caucus came to the conclusion that having another election would not solve anything and all it would do would be to make things worse.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Madam Speaker, since this is the first opportunity I have had to rise while you have been in the chair, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment and tell you how proud I am as a woman parliamentarian and a fellow British Columbian to see you in the position that you hold today.

I am speaking today on the budget implementation bill. A number of issues have been discussed already in the House around the inadequacies of the budget that the government has put forward. The budget does not adequately address the very desperate needs of Canadians from coast to coast in this critically uncertain economic time. People are losing their jobs and families are very concerned about being able to hold on to their homes.

The government is also doing something else. The government had committed not to bring in unnecessary confidence motions, yet in the budget bill the government is adding items that have nothing to do with the budget. It is bringing in through the back door things that are more ideologically motivated and really have nothing to do with stimulating Canada's economy.

The Conservatives are taking away women's right to pursue pay equity under the Human Rights Act. They are opening up Canadian industry to more foreign ownership. They are almost putting a for sale sign on Air Canada. They are making punitive efforts to go after students who are carrying student loan debt. The budget overall totally fails to protect the vulnerable in our society, to safeguard the jobs of today or to create the green technology jobs needed for tomorrow. It does nothing to protect the vulnerable in society, the people without homes, women and children. There is nothing in it for child care.

Some of the things in the budget implementation bill which have nothing to do with stimulating the economy are the amendments to the Navigable Waters Protection Act to streamline the approval process. More authority is being given to the minister to allow construction without environmental assessments. Pay equity will no longer go through the Canadian Human Rights Commission. With regard to foreign ownership there are changes to the Investment Canada Act so that only significant investments will be reviewed. A new national security provision has been added, which is rather worrisome. Members will remember the debate we had last year in the House of Commons about RADARSAT-2. I have mentioned the Canada student loan changes.

Collective agreements are being cut. In fact, the government on that side of the House that always talks about crime and community safety is rolling back the increases that were given to the RCMP only in June. If the RCMP cannot trust the Conservative government, I do not know how other Canadians can.

Another issue is employment insurance. The necessary changes have not been made to the two-week waiting period. In my community people are waiting up to eight weeks for their first cheque. As we all know, less than 40% of working Canadians qualify for employment insurance and the government has made no changes to that.

I want to take a moment to talk about the process my community went through in the lead-up to the budget. We were asked by the government side and by Canadians to consult with them about what they wanted in this federal budget.

In my riding we sent out thousands of invitations to British Columbians to participate in a community forum. Large advertisements were placed in the papers and emails were sent. Each of the three city councils and councillors were invited to attend. A non-partisan facilitator who has a lot of experience, Ted Kuntz, was present, along with other facilitators.

*Statements by Members*

On January 3 there was a snowstorm in my community. We do not get snowstorms in New Westminster—Coquitlam very often, but even then the room was full of people from the community, community organizations and interested people from my riding who wanted to have some of the hard discussions around what they would like to see in the federal budget. We broke down into small groups with the facilitators and came back with recommendations. I want to talk about the kinds of things that activists, city councillors and mayors in my community thought should be in the budget.

● (1350)

They noted that from 2005 to 2008, homelessness in the city of New Westminster has risen 53%. They noted that homelessness in the Coquitlam area, in the tri-cities had risen 157% from 2005 to 2008. They noted that average rents in New Westminster had gone up 28% in the last six years alone. All of us from B.C. and from the Vancouver region know how unaffordable ordinary housing is for families. They talked about needing a national affordable housing strategy, and of course we did not see that in the budget. There is a small tax credit for people who want to renovate their cottages and for people who want to put new grass around their homes, but there is no national housing strategy. Canada at one time had a housing strategy that was the envy of the world. Nations came from all over the world to look at how we developed our housing strategy, but no longer. That speaks to why we have so many people on the street today.

My community also raised the issue of transit. They would like to get out of their cars and get around our community and to downtown Vancouver with rapid transit that would be ecologically more sustainable. They talked about the Evergreen transit line which, by the way, is mentioned in the budget as the priority for British Columbia, but all it says in the budget is that it could be funded. There are no hard dollars attached, no real commitment at this point to the Evergreen line.

They talked about the desperate need in my riding for seismic upgrades to our schools. Madam Speaker, you know, because you live in the same province as I do, that we are in a very dangerous earthquake zone, the worst seismic hazard zone in all of Canada, in fact. Fifteen schools in my riding rate high on the need for vital upgrades to make those schools safe for our children in the event of an earthquake.

They raised the issue of public safety. They noted that Canadians had been promised in the 2006 election an additional 2,500 RCMP officers for municipalities across the country. We have not seen that either. My community in Coquitlam has one of the lowest ratios of police officers to population in the entire country. Instead of delivering on this promise, the government is rolling back an agreement on wage increases for the RCMP. I submit that could further demoralize the force and make it even more difficult to recruit the RCMP officers that we need.

Child care was a huge item mentioned because the demand far outstrips the supply in my community. Five hundred and twenty requests for child care placements were denied in the city of New Westminster in 2007 alone. Average full-time child care spaces cost families about \$700 a month which is far too high.

They talked about the green economy. They talked about shipbuilding. They talked about salmon. Salmon is almost a cultural icon in British Columbia but is also very much a part of our economy. They also looked for promises on addressing the pine beetle infestation that has affected British Columbia. Douglas College tuition has increased by 78% in the last five years.

It was a terrific consultative process. Out of that process came the “Community Blueprint for the Federal Budget, New Westminster—Coquitlam—Port Moody, Economic Investment Considerations and Priorities”. We have heard over and over on this side of the House how New Democrats have not put any effort into what they wanted to see from the Minister of Finance. This document was put together by the community members, the community leaders and ordinary citizens in my communities of New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody and was delivered to the Minister of Finance in advance of the budget being tabled in the House. However, we did not see our needs reflected in the Conservatives' budget.

● (1355)

Therefore, today I would like to seek unanimous consent to table this document, the community blueprint for the federal budget from New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody, and have it added to the public record. There have been some discussions with different parties, indicating that I would be asking for unanimous consent, and I hope I have that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table the document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### DIANNE JOHNSTON

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Madam Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to the unsung heroes of our lives. Parliamentary spouses deserve much credit, but they seldom received any recognition.

One special hero was Dianne Johnston, the beloved wife of Dale Johnston, the former member of Parliament for Wetaskiwin. On January 7, cancer claimed Dianne's life. An MP's spouse for over 12 years, Dianne was a confidante, soulmate and a source of moral support for Dale as he tackled the challenges that come with this demanding job.

While Dale made the long weekly commute to Ottawa, Dianne kept the home fires burning on their farm. On weekends, she accompanied Dale as he made the rounds of constituency activities. She patiently listened and applauded hundreds of speeches and campaigned alongside Dale with vigour. Dianne's charming nature and infectious sense of humour were appreciated by all those who had the good fortune to meet her. She will be truly missed by everyone who knew her.

As we send our heartfelt condolences to Dale and their daughters, Dalene and Michelle, let us all take time to thank our spouses for their dedication, their love and their support.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

### AJAX

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, one community in Canada produced more munitions for the allied war effort during World War II than any other in the British Commonwealth. This community is named after a legendary Royal Navy ship, key to the first decisive victory on the seas against Nazi Germany. It is the town of Ajax, the community I am honoured to represent.

The town of Ajax is seeking one other very special distinction, for a Canadian navy ship to be named in the town's honour. Ajax is a community passionate about its links to the navy and its unique role in the defence of liberty.

This October Ajax will hold a 70th anniversary event commemorating the battle of the River Plate. For both Ajacians and surviving war heroes, no honour could be more great than the government announcing that a future Canadian naval ship will bear the name HMCS Ajax.

I recognize the dedicated work of so many Ajacians in this campaign, including Ajax town council and Mayor Parish, and I ask for the full support of the House.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### EMERGENCY SERVICES IN A VALLEYFIELD FACTORY

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Madam Speaker, on September 22, the first responders at the General Dynamics factory in Valleyfield received an emergency call over the radio, stating that a man was lying on the floor. The emergency response team quickly began looking for the victim, which is not easy in a factory of that size. The rescuers, who are employees at the factory as well as volunteer firefighters, found a man who had stopped breathing and was without a pulse. They started CPR and, a short time later, his heart began to beat again.

When the victim, Jean-Louis Benoit, was admitted to the emergency room, the doctor made it clear: without such quick and effective help, Mr. Benoit would not have survived.

Speaking personally and on behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I would like to commend the heroic acts of the first responders: Serge Fecteau, Guy Guymont, Sach Haineault, Gérard Jodry and Jacques Roy.

Bravo, their vigilance has saved a life.

\* \* \*

[English]

### TOOL, DIE AND MOULD INDUSTRY

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, today a group of tool, die and mould shop owners from my community are

### Statements by Members

travelling far and wide to ensure that they are not among the forgotten and forsaken of the Conservative government. This sector, which employs thousands of Canadians across the country and is the backbone of the entire manufacturing industry, has been left to twist in the wind while the government tries to figure out how to support an industry it chose to ignore until the eleventh hour.

This is yet another example of the Conservative government scrambling to make the insufficient and ill-conceived appear constructive. It is unconscionable that these reactive half measures have become business as usual for the government. Even more shameful is the official opposition, which is aware of these shortcomings, has chosen to align itself with the very people who have led us down this tragic path.

Allow me to acknowledge the efforts of these individuals who are only asking for fairness and support, support that the government has so willingly provided to other sectors of the economy. It is outrageous that they are compelled to put so much time and energy into demanding from the government what should have already been provided.

I hope the Minister of Industry will meet with this delegation and start to work them on a solution.

\* \* \*

### 2010 WINTER OLYMPICS

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the countdown is on. With only one year to go before Canada hosts the 2010 Winter Games, communities across the country are being invited to celebrate the countdown to 2010 in their own unique way.

One of the easiest ways to participate is simply by making some noise this Thursday, February 12, one year from the start of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games. At exactly 6 p.m. local time, in time zones across the country, Canadians of all ages are invited to make some noise. Honk car horns, sound foghorns, ring sleigh bells, sing songs or bang drums, anything to show Canada's pride as the games draw near.

On Parliament Hill, the Minister of State for Sport is inviting everyone out at 5:45 p.m. on Thursday to meet with our athletes and ring the Peace Tower bells. Let us build on the huge success of our athletes over this past weekend.

No matter how people plan to celebrate the one-year countdown, let us make some noise Canada and get involved in what will be the greatest Winter Olympics in the history of the games.

*Statements by Members***HEALTH**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Mental Health Commission of Canada holds its regional round table in Ottawa today, providing local stakeholders with an opportunity to respond to its draft document, "Toward Recovery and Well-being—A Framework for a Mental Health Strategy for Canada", I remind the House that good health is not possible without good mental health.

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

Each year, one in five Canadians will encounter mental health issues. Consequently, virtually every family in this country will be directly impacted by mental illness.

[*English*]

Support for mental health is especially pertinent during this economic crisis as Canadian families struggle to pay the bills and cope with job losses.

For far too long, stigma has kept mental health issues off the public agenda. Canada needs a system that puts people living with mental illness at its centre, with a clear focus on their ability to recover.

The Mental Health Commission has a mandate to ensure that mental health issues stay out of the shadows forever and to reduce the stigma of mental illness. We have to do our part too.

\* \* \*

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as we pass through this difficult period of economic uncertainty, Canadians want to be assured their government is accountable and responsible in its actions.

Last week, in the public accounts committee, we heard testimony from representatives from the Auditor General's Office, where they stated:

We commend the government for producing financial statements that are fairly stated in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles. In our view, Canada continues to demonstrate leadership in financial reporting by a national government.

The committee chair also stated:

As has been said by colleagues, this is a clean report. It's been 10 consecutive years now where we've had a clean report, unqualified, from the Auditor General, with a high level of transparency, consistency of accuracy, and I think we, and all Canadians, should be very proud of that fact.

I could not agree more. Canadians want an accountable government. The government is delivering.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**MARCEL PRUD'HOMME**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of friendship and with great respect, I am pleased to pay tribute to our hon. colleague from Montreal, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, who today celebrates 45 years as a parliamentarian, including over 29 years in the House of Commons. Serving his fellow citizens for

so long in this Parliament constitutes a rare and commendable achievement.

All his life, Marcel Prud'homme has dedicated himself, body and soul, to politics. He has been and continues to be passionately involved in international affairs. He continually advocates dialogue and reaching out to those whom, he believes, we sometimes mistakenly call our enemies. He is remembered for his participation in numerous parliamentary associations.

Marcel Prud'homme is a man of great vision and a man of peace. Those who have accused him of being biased or impartial over the years understood nothing of his motivations. As he often said, he is not pro-this or pro-that; he is above all pro-justice.

May his commitment serve as an example to us all. Thanks to Senator Prud'homme. We wish him all the very best.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**AUSTRALIA**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are deeply saddened to learn of the many casualties resulting from the bushfires raging in Australia. The stories and images of lost lives, bereaved families and physical destruction of communities are truly horrific and heartbreaking.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I convey to the people of Australia, but particularly to those who have lost loved ones in the devastation, our heartfelt condolences.

Canadians feel a particular solidarity with Australians at this time given our own direct experience with forest fires and the destruction they cause.

During this period of difficulty, I would also like to express our admiration for the firefighters and emergency services personnel, who are bravely putting their lives at risk to save others.

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**CANADIAN JUNIOR MEN'S CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all residents of Prince Edward Island, I would like to congratulate Brett Gallant and his teammates on winning the Canadian Junior Men's Curling Championship last Sunday in Salmon Arm, British Columbia.

Brett and his teammates, third Adam Casey, second Anson Carmody and lead Jamie Danbrook, played an exceptional game, defeating northern Ontario's rink, skipped by Dylan Johnston, in a 7-6 nail-biter by scoring two in an impressive 10th end final.

Coaching the team was Brett's father, Peter Gallant, who himself has a long history in curling as an eight-time Brier participant for Prince Edward Island. The Gallant rink played hard and remained focused right up to the last rock. It proved that hard work and perseverance does pay off.

This team becomes the second Canadian Junior Men's Curling Championship title for Prince Edward Island since the championship began in 1950.

I ask the members to please join me in congratulating Brett, Jamie, Anson and Adam on their new title of Canadian Junior Men's Curling Championship and wish them every success as they represent Canada at the 2009 World Junior Curling Championships held next month in Vancouver, British Columbia.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[Translation]

### BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are going through a serious economic crisis, and all Canadians have to work together to help Canada come out of it stronger than ever. Unfortunately, instead of choosing to cooperate in these difficult times, the Bloc members have chosen to be divisive. They want to divide Canadians, divide Quebecers.

I want to remind the Bloc members that our budget includes major spending for infrastructure renovations in Quebec, helps companies and communities in difficulty, improves employment insurance benefits, stimulates housing construction and reduces Quebecers' tax burden.

I urge the Bloc members to stop dividing Quebecers and start working with us to get our economy going again.

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[English]

### NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise all my colleagues in the House of Commons of a glorious springtime coming to Canada.

In British Columbia, Carole James and the B.C. NDP are on the precipice of victory in the provincial election coming in May.

Better than that, my home province, the great province of Nova Scotia, is on the verge of electing the very first New Democratic government in Atlantic Canada. Under the wise leadership of Darrell Dexter, it is time to take Rodney MacDonald and the Conservatives, throw the bums out of Nova Scotia and replace them with an accountable, progressive, social democratic government in Nova Scotia.

We want to say to all the citizens of British Columbia, as Tommy Douglas once said, "Courage my friends, 'tis not too late to make a better world". That day will come soon to the great people of British Columbia and especially to the wonderful people of Nova Scotia.

\* \* \*

### GARY ROSENFELDT

**Mr. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Government of Canada to pay our respects to the late Gary Rosenfeldt and express our deepest sympathy to his wife, Sharon.

On Sunday, Gary lost his battle with cancer. However, Gary and Sharon have not lost the battle to have victims' voices heard in this country. This heroic couple turned a family nightmare, the murder of

### Statements by Members

their son Daryn at the hands of one of Canada's most notorious killers, Clifford Olson, into a tireless crusade for tougher penalties, stronger parole provisions, and most important, a heightened awareness of victims' rights in a justice system that all too often had ignored them.

The Rosenfeldts founded the advocacy organization Victims of Violence, and as a result of this organization and other similar ones, today we now have the first federal ombudsman for victims of crime.

In remembering him, the justice minister said that Gary Rosenfeldt was one of the great champions for Canadians whose lives have been shattered by violence, and that his death is a great loss to those who take victims' rights seriously.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### OMAR KHADR

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on February 9, the Amnesty International group at Thérèse-Martin de Joliette secondary school and their teacher, Marcel Lacroix, sent letters to President Obama and the Prime Minister asking for the return to Canada of young Omar Khadr, who has been held in Guantanamo for over six years. This child soldier was only 15 when arrested.

For more than three years, these young people from my riding of Joliette, and many human rights activists, have been constantly calling on the government to bring young Khadr back to Canada. They are urging the Prime Minister to ask President Obama, at their meeting scheduled for February 19, to return Omar Khadr.

This government remains insensitive and refuses to listen to the calls for the return of Omar Khadr by Amnesty International, the Canadian Bar Association, human rights groups and the Bloc Québécois.

I wish to commend Amnesty International for its tireless efforts and I applaud the commitment of the young people in my riding who, unlike this government, show a social conscience.

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### MARCEL PRUD'HOMME

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Montreal senator the hon. Marcel Prud'homme in recognition of his 45 years as a parliamentarian.

Senator Prud'homme was elected to the House of Commons on February 10, 1964, following a byelection in the riding of Saint-Denis to replace the hon. Azellus Denis. He held his seat until May 26, 1993, when he was appointed to the Senate as the representative for the La Salle region.

Ever dedicated and involved, Senator Prud'homme is known for his ability to turn a fine phrase.

A strong advocate for world peace, he is open to others and willing to listen. He has always encouraged dialogue. He once said, "Relationships must be maintained, regardless of the circumstances".

*Oral Questions*

In November 2007, he was awarded the Order of Friendship of the Russian Federation for maintaining dialogue with other nations even when he did not share their ideology.

I would like to thank this great Canadian, my friend, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, for his tremendous contribution to parliamentarianism.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[English]

**SAFER INTERNET DAY**

**Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the Government of Canada recognizes Safer Internet Day in announcing the renewal of the national strategy for the protection of children from sexual exploitation on the Internet. Today's announcement signals our government's ongoing commitment to help keep our children safe.

On February 28, 2008, Parliament passed Bill C-2, which increased the age of consent for sexual activity from 14 to 16 years of age to better protect youth against adult sexual predators. Our government also invested \$6 million per year, provided through budget 2007, to strengthen existing initiatives to combat exploitation and trafficking of children.

We will continue to work with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and the RCMP's National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre to eliminate online child exploitation. This government is committed to raising awareness about the abuse of children and to the investigation and pursuit of those who engage in exploitation—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Oral questions. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said last Friday that there would be no new stimulus measures, even if the economy continues to decline; the so-called economic action plan is the plan. However, on the same day the finance minister appeared to say the opposite. He said, "If it's necessary to do more, we'll do more".

The Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance appear to have some kind of disagreement and Canada needs clarity.

Will there or will there not be further action beyond the budget as the crisis worsens?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week the leader of the Liberal Party supported the budget. This week he is criticizing the budget.

I can assure him that both I and the Minister of Finance agree that we do not change budgetary policy once a week.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, can I therefore take it as being the policy of the government

that the economic action plan is the plan, and that it is not going to change?

The facts are changing hourly. The government is not going to adapt; it is not going to respond. Is that the meaning of the Prime Minister's answer?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government just put forward a budget, another step in our economic action plan, that involves tens of billions of dollars of stimulus to this economy. Obviously, we will see how things unfold in the months to come.

It is important that we proceed with a plan, that we act on a plan and that we do not change our plan every week.

If the Leader of the Opposition believes there should be changes, I would invite him to do something he never did in the prebudget period, which is to actually provide some economic policy suggestions to Parliament.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition [Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would rather put him in touch with those affected by the crisis, like the mayor of Sudbury. Sudbury has just lost close to 700 jobs through mine closings. Less than three years ago, the government had promised to protect those same jobs through an Investment Canada guarantee.

Why did the government sign an agreement that we now know is worthless?

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, there have been major changes in the mining sector. The Minister of Industry is in negotiations with this company in order to ensure that jobs are preserved in the long term.

We are in a period of unprecedented global economic downturn, and it is our intention to continue to work to ensure Canadian jobs.

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**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec lost close to 26,000 jobs this past January, in aerospace in particular, a key sector of our Canadian economy. The Minister of Industry and his colleague, the Minister of Public Works, however, see no need to create a program to assist the aerospace industry.

Yet during the last election campaign, the Conservatives were promising a \$200 million envelope for the strategic aerospace and defence initiative. That amount is not to be found in the budget, however. Why is that?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian aerospace industry will be affected by the world economic crisis, as will all other sectors, of course.

We have, however, already announced \$900 million for the aerospace industry, through the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, or SADI, and the Canada First defence strategy.



Contracts are going to Canadian and Quebec businesses and the economic action plan is also strengthening our support to industry.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is false, and not an answer to the question.

The aerospace industry was indeed supposed to benefit from the spinoffs of the military procurement contracts, but this is not the case. As for the C-130J, according to Claude Lajeunesse, president of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, so far all Lockheed Martin has made available is work packages that lack any substantial design, engineering support and development activities. That is the very reason for the existence of the aerospace industry in Canada.

So where are the positive spinoffs promised by the Conservative government?

[English]

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows only too well that these kinds of relationships mean that there will be announcements by the contractor as it goes forward. That is certainly the case here. I am sure the hon. member will be the first hon. member to stand up in the House and applaud when those new jobs are announced.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, when the Conservatives were proclaiming that there was no recession in sight, the Prime Minister promised to inject \$200 million into the aerospace industry. Now, when the aerospace industry is in serious trouble and numerous jobs are being lost, the Prime Minister is refusing to pay the promised \$200 million.

How does the Prime Minister explain this completely twisted logic, which the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada has roundly condemned?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the government has made commitments to this industry and we are going to keep our promise, as usual. The aerospace industry is a vital part of Canada's economy. The government has invested \$350 million in the CSeries alone, and there are other investments to come.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in its latest budget, the government has injected \$2.7 billion into the automotive industry. Curiously, the Prime Minister cannot find the \$200 million he promised the aerospace industry during the most recent election campaign. The aerospace industry is to Quebec what the automotive industry is to Ontario.

Is the Prime Minister not in the process of once again favouring Ontario at Quebec's expense?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that question is another example of the Bloc's sectarian strategy. Yesterday in Montreal, the Minister of Industry announced a major investment in the Canadian Space Agency. Other announcements will be made in the weeks to come. One thing is for sure: the Bloc will never be able to take real action to help Canada's aerospace industry.

### Oral Questions

#### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is showing the same insensitivity when it comes to the difficulties faced by Quebec's forestry industry. The Prime Minister refuses to rein in his minister of state who maintains, against the entire industry's opinion, that granting loan guarantees would violate the softwood lumber agreement.

Could the Prime Minister identify the exact clause in the agreement that, in his opinion, would forbid loan guarantees?

• (1425)

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Avrim Lazar, the president of the Forest Products Association of Canada said that it is not perfect, but that anything the government does could risk new problems at the border. That is the industry talking. In his opinion, any direct aid would endanger the industry's access to the American market, which must be avoided at all costs.

Even the industry is saying it. I hope that the Bloc will understand.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is not what the people in Quebec's industry are saying to this minister. While closures are increasing in the forestry industry and layoffs have reached a record high, with more than 21,000 jobs lost, how can the Prime Minister be so unsympathetic towards the thousands of people who are out of work and their families and how can he refuse loan guarantees to the forestry industry, a legal measure that the Quebec industry is requesting?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while respecting our agreements, we have put in place a number of programs that allow workers to have a future: through training; through shared work—we will add 14 benefit weeks; through renovation grants—we will increase the sale of wood in this country; and through an additional five weeks at the end of employment insurance benefits. We have also implemented significant programs for social housing, a freeze on contribution rates and many others.

While the Bloc Québécois keeps on criticizing, we, the government, are taking action.

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#### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, President Obama's economic recovery plan was passed by the U.S. Senate today. Obama's plan is equivalent to 3% of the American GDP. That is greater than the G20 recommendation. The Conservative government's plan is, proportionally, only one third of Obama's recovery plan.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to do as much for Canadians as Obama is doing for his citizens?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our situation and that of the United States, and consequently our respective plans, are different. For example, the Obama plan has lots of money for state and municipal governments. We solved the fiscal imbalance two years ago. That is one difference. We acted earlier than the United States.

[English]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's plan falls far short of what is needed.

The U.S. senate has adopted a stimulus package equal to 3% of the GDP of the U.S. and the G20 recommends 2%, something the Prime Minister said he supported, but now we learn from the government's own figures and the parliamentary budget officer that the total stimulus in the government's package is .7 of 1%. The fact is it does not go nearly far enough to deal with the crisis in our economy.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that more has to be done? He has to get on the same train that we see the President of the United States taking to move our economy—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the House will know, the government began adopting stimulus measures in the fall of 2007. Those stimulus measures are certainly equal to what any other country in the world has done. They are one of the reasons, notwithstanding the difficulties we have, why our relative growth in employment rates have been positive compared to a lot of other countries. We certainly do not want to replicate the situation in the United States of 3.5 million job losses here in Canada.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that plan in the fall really worked. We have lost a quarter of a million jobs in the last 90 days, and the ideas and funds they offered to General Motors are being turned down by the company.

Meanwhile, if we look south of the border, where there was a more sensible approach to help the auto industry move toward a green auto production future, the company took up the money and are creating jobs in the United States. Meanwhile, our industry is threatened here.

When is the Prime Minister going to bring forward a plan for the creation of a green car job strategy here in Canada that will put Canadians to work and match what is being done in the United States?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the leader of the New Democratic Party should know, this government has made clear that it is working in close collaboration with our partners in the United States on the restructuring of the auto industry. That is a fact. What Canadians and Canadians in the auto sector want to know is that the New Democratic Party will actually support some of these initiatives instead of deciding it is against them before it even reads them.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the recession is devastating British Columbia. There have been 68,000 full-time jobs lost, bankruptcies are soaring, and home sales are

crashing. There is damage in every sector: construction, mining, forestry, financial services and tourism. Men and women are losing their livelihoods. They are losing their businesses. They are losing their homes.

Why is the Prime Minister so utterly incapable of giving them any hope?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we are in the midst of a synchronized global recession, the likes of which has not been seen since the second world war. That is why two weeks ago, here, in order to help Canadians from coast to coast to coast, we introduced Canada's economic action plan; the ways and means motion in support, which the official opposition supported; and the budget implementation bill, which has been introduced.

What Liberals need to do is get this bill through the House so we can start flowing the money and helping Canadians.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like we have a new buzzword from across the aisle.

In December, while the Prime Minister was busy protecting his own job and insisting that this was just a "technical recession", the people of B.C. were suffering. Bankruptcies jumped 42% from the previous December, home sales plunged 58%, and the 68,000 full-time jobs lost last month could be only the tip of the iceberg.

Could the Prime Minister tell workers laid off in B.C., did he not understand the depth of the problem or did he just not care?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think the depth of the problem is clear. In fact, it is laid out clearly in Canada's economic action plan, a plan that the hon. member has supported.

She knows, as you do, Mr. Speaker, that we need the cooperation of the provinces to have the infrastructure stimulus we need. We need international cooperation for that stimulus. Let us get it done. Let us work for the people of Canada. Let us get the bill passed, so that Canadians can be helped to get back to work.

\* \* \*

**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, British Columbia has been hardest hit by this recession. Last month, B.C. lost 68,000 jobs, 600 of them in the central Okanagan. The forestry industry is heavily impacted by mill closures and towns like Mackenzie have been devastated.

The Conservative government promised \$400 million in the 2006 and 2007 budgets to deal with the pine beetle problem. In three years, it has only delivered a quarter of that money. Could the minister assure British Columbians that she will keep more than 25% of her government's promises this time?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government undertook an unprecedented level of consultation from one part of the country to the other, including British Columbia. I attended many round tables, speaking to those involved with the forestry industry, the result of which was the president and CEO of the Forest Products Association of Canada indicating the following on our economic action plan: "The Budget investments in innovation, market promotion and research and development signal to us the government gets it".

\* \* \*

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that kind of happy rhetoric is not helping anybody, particularly my province of British Columbia. In Victoria, there has been an 84% decline in construction in January alone. Thousands of people have lost their jobs. Yet, in the face of this, what we have seen is that, although British Columbians pay the same premiums as other Canadians, they have less ability to access and be eligible for EI.

My question is this: when will the government stop the discrimination against British Columbia?

• (1435)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the rules for employment insurance are the same right across the country. What varies is the amount of benefits that go as situations change based on local conditions. As a local economy such as Oshawa deteriorates, its eligibility for benefits becomes easier and it gets benefits for longer.

I would point out to the hon. member that his Liberal premier supports our economic action plan.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### INDUSTRY

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region recently said that under the Investment Canada Act, Rio Tinto Alcan will soon be subject to a review and will have to prove that it is honouring the conditions and commitments it undertook towards the government.

The minister is suggesting that his government imposed conditions on Rio Tinto's acquisition of Alcan. If that is the case, can the Minister of Industry tell us what those conditions were?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Rio Tinto's proposal to acquire Alcan was approved based on its plans and commitments, which demonstrated that Canada was likely to benefit. My representatives have been in contact with the company to oversee the application of those plans and commitments,

#### Oral Questions

and they will continue to do so. I believe Rio Tinto will honour its commitments.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government missed out on an excellent opportunity to demand guarantees from Rio Tinto regarding employment and processing activities in the region, and simply contented itself with Alcan's original commitments.

Can the minister tell us the truth once and for all, and acknowledge that he made a serious mistake by not imposing any conditions on Rio Tinto?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not true. Rio Tinto made commitments with an action plan and probable benefits for Canada. I will do my job and protect Canadian jobs.

\* \* \*

#### CULTURE

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the documents supporting the cuts in funding for culture will not be made public by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on the grounds that they are cabinet discussion documents and thus classified as secret. That is pretty weak. Either the documents do not exist or their conclusions do not suit the government.

Either way, is the refusal to make these documents public not proof that there was no basis for these cuts?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage I explained each decision taken by our government. I spoke about each of them in detail. Our government wants to meet the needs of our artists. If a program like Trade Routes costs \$5 million and provides only \$2 billion in benefits, it is not an effective exchange for artists or taxpayers. We are investing \$2.3 billion for artists, and the Bloc is opposing it.

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there was no in depth analysis yesterday, despite what the minister is saying. If he did his analyzing that way, we can understand why he reaches such hare brained conclusions. This government unveiled the budget at every forum before presenting it to the House. To say it is secret and he cannot provide it because it was a matter of cabinet discussions is pretty weak.

Will the minister acknowledge that the real reason for his refusal to reinstate funding has more to do with a desire for vengeance on artists and on Quebec, given his party's defeat there in the most recent election?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here is a clear analysis for all Canadians, Quebecers and my colleague's constituents. In this budget, there is more money for festivals, theatres, libraries, small museums, the national arts training program, dance, music, art, drama and Canadians' access to magazines and community newspapers. There is more money for the Canadian television fund, restoration of historic sites and the Quebec City armoury.

*Oral Questions*

That is a clear analysis. It is in the budget, which the Bloc opposes.

• (1440)

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when he appeared before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, the minister took advantage of the opportunity to throw some numbers around that do not hold water. He said that the budget included \$276 million for new investments in culture, which is not true. Even if we were to humour him by accepting that number, then compared it to the money invested in stimulating the economy, we would see that only eight-tenths of one per cent of that amount is going to culture—not even one per cent.

Is that what he calls investing in our priorities?

[English]

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Again, Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Honoré-Mercier conveniently forgets that under this Conservative government we have increased funding for arts and culture every single year we have been in power. Of course he ignores that fact.

We have increased funding again for arts and culture in this budget. We have new money for festivals, new money for libraries, new money for museums, new money across the board, more money for cultural spaces. There is more money for Canadians for arts and culture under our government than under any government in Canadian history.

Of course, we are going to continue this approach because we believe in arts and culture, even if the Liberal Party is ignorant of the facts.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in that same committee hearing, I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage a very simple question to which he partially responded, but a full answer is required, so I will ask him again. Can he guarantee to the House and to all Canadians that his government will never again use its power to censor culture in our country?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we did not do it before, so of course we will not be doing it again.

With regard to arts and culture, our government has supported Canadian heritage and supported important institutions that are important to the future of this country, important to the quality of life of Canadians. For example, there is more money for institutions like the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Ontario Museum, all these fantastic institutions that improve the quality of life of Canadians.

We are making these investments that are important to Canadians. We are going to continue to do it because it is what Canadians elected us to do.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Government of the United States is discussing with a number of its allies the question of what to do with those who are currently prisoners in Guantanamo.

I would like to ask the minister whether or not Canada is participating in these discussions and whether or not discussions about Guantanamo will be held between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States when he comes next week.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will have the possibility of going into more depth on that. With regard to his first question, the answer is no. On his second question, I believe that the agenda that is going to be discussed between the President of the United States and the Prime Minister is still under discussion, and stay tuned.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Khadr's situation is primarily a Canadian issue. I would like to put my question to the minister again.

Will he acknowledge that it would be better to guarantee guidance and supervision to bring Mr. Khadr back, instead of having a situation where we do not know exactly what will happen in the U.S. courts? Why not take advantage of the situation and negotiate directly with the Americans to ensure Mr. Khadr's return to Canada?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member's assumption is based on the fact that he does not know what will happen in the United States, even though one of the first things that the President of the United States did was issue an order to close the military base at Guantanamo and to resolve this and every other detainee's case. Clearly, what we have to do is have faith in the system that is in place and not question the credibility of the President of the United States.

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[English]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are no members of society who are more vulnerable than the children and youth of Canada. We as a government have a responsibility to protect children from the dangers that threaten them every day. The vast majority of children now have access to the Internet and online community. The massive child pornography bust last week only underscores some of the grave risks children may face online.

Seeing as today is Safer Internet Day, could the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on the work being done by the government to protect our children from these people who are lurking online?

• (1445)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Prince Albert for his interest in this important issue.

Our government takes seriously the priority of protecting Canadians, particularly young Canadians. In a world where technology changes and the routes that predators take are changing, it is ever more important that on a day like today, Safer Internet Day, we observe the importance of that and communicate that to people.

*Oral Questions*

I am proud to state that today we have announced the renewal of the national strategy for the protection of children from sexual exploitation on the Internet. This will assist our government and our valued partners in our ongoing efforts to combat child victimization and increase our capacity to track down, investigate and prosecute offenders in this priority area.

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we learned today that Omar Khadr has given up on appealing to the Prime Minister. Instead, he is appealing to the United States to return home.

How could things have gone so terribly wrong that a Canadian citizen gives up on his own country and turns to a foreign leader for the due process he should have been afforded here in Canada? When will the Prime Minister finally take action to bring Omar Khadr home to face justice here in Canada?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our position regarding this case has not changed. It is exactly the same position that the previous government put forward. This individual has been accused of the very serious charges of terrorism and murder.

As the member knows, there is a process in place that has already commenced. We will wait until such time as that process which has just been put in place by the President of the United States completes its course.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, every other country that had nationals in Guantanamo fulfilled their basic obligations and got them out, every country but Canada.

Lieutenant Commander Bill Kuebler says that attempts over the past year and a half to speak to senior officials at the Prime Minister's office or in the Department of Justice or the Department of Public Safety have met with the same closed door. This is no way to treat a Canadian.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to raise the issue of Omar Khadr when he meets with President Obama next week?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, officials in my department have carried out regular discussions with both the defence and the prosecution in this case. I also want to point out that consular services have been offered to this individual. He is being treated as any other Canadian citizen in detention would be treated.

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*[Translation]***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government is planning to privatize inspection procedures in slaughterhouses. Under the pilot projects, private sector employees rather than government veterinarians are responsible for rejecting substandard poultry carcasses. This regulatory change could lead to a new health crisis. I would remind members

that, last August, a listeriosis outbreak caused about 20 deaths and made hundreds of other people ill.

Has the minister learned nothing from his mistakes?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question raised by the member concerning poultry carcasses, the pilot program was introduced by the previous government. Public health is our primary concern. It is important for citizens to be protected. We will, of course, protect the health of Canadians.

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency fired an employee who revealed the government's secret plans for privatization and budget cuts. Food safety is a matter of public health. We cannot take chances with it.

Does the minister realize that his decisions undermine the people's confidence in the food inspection system?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will repeat that it is a pilot project established by the previous government. Food safety is our primary concern. The health of Canadians comes first for us and we will naturally continue with that approach.

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*[English]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is more clear than ever that the government is betraying workers who are losing their jobs. Economists, labour leaders and social policy groups called for dramatic and immediate action on EI. The government chose not to increase access nor to speed up payment.

The minister said she does not want to make EI too lucrative. According to Statistics Canada, the average Canadian who manages to qualify for benefits receives \$331 a week. Could the minister tell us at exactly what dollar level does EI become too lucrative?

• (1450)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after our consultations, we followed up on what Canadians asked us for. They asked us for help in getting trained for new jobs, jobs that are going to last a long time. That is why we are making substantial investments in training and retraining so that people will have jobs in the health care sector and other areas that are going to last a long time.

We are also adding five weeks of benefits for those who are unfortunate enough to lose their jobs. We are there for Canadians.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, even the conservative C.D. Howe Institute said that it is surprising the government could not find ways to ease access for laid-off workers.

### Oral Questions

It seems that everybody except the government sees that EI is critical for families right now, and it is the perfect stimulus for the economy as well as the unemployed.

When will those out of touch Conservatives respond to the needs of our workers who are on EI not because it is lucrative or because they want to be, but because they need it to feed their families in a difficult time? When will the minister stop changing the subject, stop making excuses, and start doing something for Canadian workers?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, almost a third of the initiatives in our economic action plan are to help workers get back to work. They are also to help them keep the jobs that they already have by expanding our work sharing program. We are providing training, not just for those who are on EI but also those who have been out of the workplace for a long time, such as parents, seniors and the self-employed.

We are expanding the benefits and making it more easily available through a system that works. We are getting the job done. They need to support it so we can get those benefits delivered to Canadians.

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### PAY EQUITY

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President of the Treasury Board misled the House by suggesting a resemblance between Manitoba and the Conservative government on pay equity.

The fact is that the Manitoba government pioneered pay equity. The Conservative government is killing it. It is not only eliminating the right of women to seek justice before the Canadian Human Rights Commission, it is also redefining pay equity out of existence.

What does the government have against paying women what they are worth?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what does the member have against women that she would make them wait for 15 years in order to resolve a pay equity complaint? It is a disgrace.

In Manitoba, in Ontario, in Quebec and in fact the Liberal task force in 2004 said that we need a proactive mechanism in order to resolve these complaints quickly. That is what we are doing. We are getting the job done.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board is perpetrating a fraud on this House and the people of Canada. It is an insult to women everywhere.

The Manitoba NDP government brought in pay equity way back in 1985, first in the public sector and then began implementing it in school divisions, municipalities, health care facilities and the private sector. Any woman at any time can take a complaint on pay equity to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

When will the government stop its macho politics and stop turning the clock back on women's rights in this country?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact that the member shouts and yells from the other end

of the House does not change the facts. The fact is that we need a mechanism to ensure we resolve these complaints in an equitable and a quick way.

I was the legal counsel for the Manitoba government in 1986 when we passed that legislation. I understand what that legislation says and I understand what we are doing here today.

I am proud to be a part of a government that puts the interests of women ahead of lawyers.

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### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the NDP proposed to reintroduce a climate change bill that would see Canada abandon our shared targets with the United States. This would put in jeopardy our plan for a joint North American climate change strategy.

Could the Minister of the Environment comment on how the bill would adversely affect the global fight against climate change?

• (1455)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me compliment my friend on his reasoned language and on his chairmanship of the environment committee of the House.

The NDP bill would have Canada diverge dramatically from the common targets that our government has put forward and that President Obama has put forward. The NDP would lead us down a path toward isolation that would exacerbate the economic downturn.

The NDP clearly does not get it. Everyone agrees that we need climate change policies that are measured to work together in partnership with other members of the international community.

For our part, we will continue to work with the new U.S. administration on this task. I encourage opposition parties to do the same.

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### HUMAN RESOURCES

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with 6,000 child care spaces expected to close in Toronto, child care workers are concerned about their jobs. The waiting lists for spaces are over two years long. Children currently in those spaces will soon have nowhere to go. Where will that leave their parents?

Because the Conservatives will not fund child care, it becomes a vicious circle of job losses. At a time when we should be creating jobs, why is the government actually causing more jobs to be lost?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is the government that has done three times as much for early learning and child care as the previous Liberal government ever did. We brought in the universal child care benefit. We are transferring \$250 million to the provinces through the social transfer for the funding of the creation of child care spaces.

The hon. member should realize that the creation of child care spaces is the jurisdiction of the provinces. We are helping them do that and that funding is increasing.

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[Translation]

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for the Quebec City area implied that the water system in Shannon would be rebuilt with money from the infrastructure program.

Are we to understand that she intends to dip shamelessly into the infrastructure envelope and use funding that could go to other projects in order to clean up the contaminated water table, for which the army bears sole responsibility?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Québec has made two things very clear here today. First, she is not concerned about the supply of drinking water, but about a constitutional and jurisdictional issue. Second, she voted against our economic action plan, which includes important infrastructure measures.

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[English]

**MINING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when Swiss-based Xstrata wanted to buy Canadian-based Falconbridge, it had to commit to no layoffs for three years. The three years are not up and yet 700 workers are being laid off. This is a clear violation of the agreement and another reason why so many Canadians are concerned with foreign takeovers.

The minister has an obligation to ensure that Xstrata upholds this agreement and he has the authority to say no to these layoffs. Will the minister truly stand up for Sudbury families and say no to these illegal layoffs?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously we are disappointed with these layoffs. We feel for the families in Sudbury and the surrounding region who are affected by them. The member knows or should know that these are challenging times for mining companies.

As a result of our efforts over the weekend, Xstrata is committed to investing between \$290 million and \$390 million in the Sudbury area over the next two years. That is standing up for Sudbury.

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for some time now, the municipality of Shannon has been dealing with a TCE contamination issue in many of its drinking water wells. Nobody can deny that this is a serious problem.

The residents who have to cope with this problem now get their water from the water supply system on the Valcartier military base.

Can the minister responsible for the Quebec City region tell us what the government has done to fix this problem?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his compassion for the people of Shannon.

I have had many opportunities to say that this issue is a priority for our government. Today, I am pleased to announce that our government will invest \$13.3 million in building new permanent water supply facilities for the people of Shannon.

Once again, the Conservative government is delivering concrete results to the people of the greater Quebec City region, but what are the member for Québec and the Bloc members doing? Nothing.

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● (1500)

[English]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

There is a bias in the tax system against some seniors but not others earning the same level of income. The OAS clawback kicks in faster for those seniors whose income is tilted more toward dividends than toward interest or other sources of income.

Is the minister aware of this bias and, if so, will he correct it, or does he wish to encourage seniors to sell their stocks? Will the minister synchronize the tax system and treat all seniors equally or does he think this is a good time to sell as opposed to a good time to buy, as the Prime Minister said?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member opposite knows, there is provision in the budget and in the budget bill to make a 25% one time change for 2008 in transfers outside of the RRIF. That takes into recognition the diminution in markets during 2008.

*Points of Order***ELECTIONS CANADA**

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we now learn that in the 2008 federal election up to 450,000 Canadians were denied their right to vote. Senior citizens, students and first nations people were arbitrarily disenfranchised, thanks to the government's disastrous electoral identification legislation.

However, the Conservatives did not just blow it once, they blew it twice and, in both cases, they ridiculed witnesses, ignored evidence and relied on those twin pillars of conservatism, which are indifference and incompetence. The result is that numerous close races may have been compromised.

What steps will the government take to redress and to ensure that every Canadian who has the right to vote is able to vote?

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice to be heard and all Canadians will be heard through the voting process, which is exactly what this government has ensured by ensuring there is integrity in the voting system. All party support for our colleagues on the committee on procedure and House affairs was followed through on by this government. Perhaps they are sad that they only get one vote but everyone gets one. We are pleased to ensure that our country remains strong, democratic and free.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—CANADA-UNITED STATES RELATIONS

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. It being 3:02 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, February 5, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Kings—Hants relating to the business of supply.

The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the order adopted on Thursday, February 5, the order for the deferred recorded division on the opposition motion in the name of the member for Kings—Hants be discharged and the motion be deemed adopted unanimously.

**The Speaker:** Is there agreement to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion adopted.  
(Motion agreed to)

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Agriculture did last week, today the Minister of National

Revenue and Minister of State for Agriculture blatantly misinformed the House on the poultry rejection program.

That program came into place in 2007 and the government continues to misinform the House as to when it came into place.

I would ask the ministers to table documents in this place that show otherwise.

● (1505)

**The Speaker:** The point of order appears to the Chair to be rather more a continuation of question period.

I know that members sometimes object but the minister did not read from a document so he is not under an obligation to table anything. His statements are one thing but he was not reading from a document.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during question period, the hon. Minister of State for Democratic Reform misinformed the House in terms of the issue of electoral legislation. I think he would want to be accurate and retract the comment.

It was very clear in both pieces of legislation that the New Democrats voted against them at committee. We brought forward witnesses. We voted against them in the House. It is incumbent upon him as minister to know his portfolio and to correct the record. I am sure he would be wanting to correct that record.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I was referring to was the voter identification measures passed in the last Parliament that were recommended by all party support. I am sorry that member seems to have a challenge hearing what I am saying but that is not a defence.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is on the same subject. It is very clear. There was a vote in the House of Commons and the NDP was the only party to vote against this change at Elections Canada concerning voter identity. It was very clear. Just check the recorded division in the House of Commons.

[English]

**The Speaker:** I am glad the matter has been clarified and I think that is the end of that point of order. Does the minister of state wish to intervene yet again on this point? I will hear him but I do not want to hear an argument about facts.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I was talking about recommendations in an all party report of the committee on procedure and House affairs.

**The Speaker:** I do not think we need to hear more on this point. The hon. member for Ottawa Centre is rising on another point?

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is actually for clarification. I was on that committee when amendments were brought forward and we voted against them. I need the minister of state to understand that when he says these things, they are interpreted that one party, this party, the NDP, supported the amendments when, clearly, the facts are contrary. All we are asking is that the minister of state understand his portfolio.



*Government Orders*

**The Speaker:** I will not hear more on this point. This is an argument as to facts. It is not a point of order dealing with the rules of the House. Sometimes people make mistakes in their statements in the House. Far be it from the Speaker to correct that kind of blunder. It happens from time to time and I am not here to act as a judge in respect of those statements, so it is not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst has the floor for another point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to start an argument, but members cannot mislead the House.

**The Speaker:** The House gets misled frequently and there are two reasons: sometimes the person making a statement says something that is not quite correct, and sometimes the person hearing a statement misunderstands what the person said. The House can be misled by either fact, and it is not for the Speaker to correct all the misleading of the House.

This is a point of debate. There is an argument about the accuracy of what the minister said. It is not for the Speaker to decide the accuracy of these statements, so it is not a point of order. It is an argument.

We can have a debate. There can be more questions of the minister tomorrow during question period, and perhaps he will answer them differently. Who knows? However, it is not for the Speaker to decide which statement is accurate and which is not. It is just not the job of the Speaker, and so we are going to move on with debate.

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst has the floor again.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise once again. Those are the facts. There was a recorded division and it was all written down. We know what the facts are.

[*English*]

He just misled the House a few minutes ago on the record—

**The Speaker:** We have heard about the vote. We have had the two sides of the argument presented. That is that. It is not a point of order. The Speaker does not decide those things, pure and simple.

People do not get up on points of order to say that the member has misled. They may argue with the member as to whether what he said was accurate or not, and that is normal for debate. That is why I say there will be more questions on the subject tomorrow.

Is the hon. member for Malpeque rising on another point of order?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, it is on this point, because it is important. Can you give me some clarification, then?

I raised my point of order with the minister, who I believe clearly misinformed the House. The Conservatives would have documentation to suggest otherwise if they were in fact telling the truth.

We have to have a way. When a minister is clearly misinforming the House and does not have the documentation to back it up, what are we to do? Are we going to—

**The Speaker:** You will have to get up, ask another question, quote some facts or figures to the minister, and ask him which is true. It is not for the Speaker to decide who is telling the truth and who is not, if you want to put it in that graphic a term. It is not a question of the accuracy of the information being given to the House. The Speaker does not decide these things and never has.

I know members love to raise these matters as points of order so that they can continue the debate, but the debate has to be continued under the rules at the normal times, and that is what we are going to do.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and related fiscal measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**The Speaker:** Before question period, the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam had the floor and there were five minutes remaining in the time allotted for questions and comments consequent on her speech.

The hon. member for Windsor West.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech prior to question period. As well, there was discussion earlier in the day with regard to the economic issues we are facing. The particular issue on which I would like the member's comments happened recently. It is the government's failure to act on a procurement policy for defence.

The United States has one. Under it the Americans actually produce some of the content in their country, and we have respected that over a number of decades. In fact, that has been involved in the U.S. legislation for years.

What has happened here is that the Conservative government has decided to enter into a contract that has affected the workers at Navistar's Chatham, Ontario, truck facility. It is actually sending \$300 million down to Texas when, right now, this government is letting the workers of the Chatham plant be fired. It is important that the work that was going to be done there would have actually allowed the plant to go forward.

What is interesting is that the Conservative government is telling Canadians as well that they cannot be the men and women who actually build the vehicles and equipment for our men and women in service, so it hurts doubly. They should have that opportunity, just as is the case in many other nations.

*Government Orders*

I would like to ask my colleague why they missed this opportunity, and what could be done in the future to make sure Canadians build the equipment used by our men and women in service.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague from Windsor West has done an incredible amount of work on this whole issue of the Navistar contract being let to the company in Texas, causing people in his own community to lose their jobs.

The defence committee conducted a short study last year on the issues around defence procurement. Many of the witnesses who came to speak to the committee talked about the need to ensure that the jobs are retained in Canada when we let one of these defence contracts.

Further in relation to the Navistar issue, we know the plant is available and the work could be done there to build these trucks for the Canadian Forces. We know it would take only a very small injection of cash to bring that plant up to speed and keep those employees working right now. I think it is in the neighbourhood of \$800,000. People cannot even buy a house in Vancouver, where I live, for \$800,000. It is a minimal investment that needs to be made so that these jobs can stay in Canada.

Has the government considered what it is going to cost in EI payments? I think it is in the neighbourhood of \$14 million in EI payments to the workers losing their jobs in his town with the Navistar contract going to Texas.

I cannot answer why the government does not have any common sense. Canadian jobs should stay in Canada and not be shipped down to Texas.

• (1515)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the speech by the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam. We share a community devastated by the softwood sellout brought in by the Conservatives with the support of the Liberals. Thousands of jobs were lost across the country. Three plants were closed, essentially, in the New Westminster area.

I would like to refer back to what the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam said about employment insurance. Half the people laid off as a result of bungled programs or negotiations such as the softwood sellout do not have access to employment insurance. The Conservatives refuse to move on this issue, and the Liberals are simply rubber-stamping the budget.

I would like to ask the member to describe the impact on families when they have been laid off as a result of plant closures and do not have access to employment insurance.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster and I share the city of New Westminster. It is known in British Columbia as the “Royal City” and has a long and proud history. Part of the origin of the city was as a lumber town. Just a few years ago there were mills all along the Fraser River, providing high-paying, family-supporting jobs not only for the people in the New Westminster community but in Port Moody and Coquitlam as well.

Three mills have shut down in New Westminster. Mills have shut down in other parts of my community, and I know the hon. member

from Burnaby—New Westminster shares this. People call my constituency office today and every day to tell me they are waiting far too long to receive their EI cheques. They tell me they are now waiting six, eight and ten weeks for the first payment to be processed. Worse than that, over 40% of Canadians who are working no longer qualify for EI benefits.

What this government is doing is a disgrace. It is not putting the needs of working families first. It has turned its back on working Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my party, the Bloc Québécois, and remind the House just how opposed we are to Bill C-10 and how disappointed we are with this budget, which is so lacking in breadth and vision. In addition, it simply turns its back on working people, on people looking for a job, and on women, in many regards on the equity question.

We are also concerned about the possible intrusion of the federal government into jurisdictions that are not its responsibility. For example, there is the announcement of \$500 million to help municipalities build new leisure facilities such as arenas and swimming pools. These are important to communities, of course, because they are health determinants. We know that at the time of the centennial of Confederation in 1967, the government helped to build a lot of these facilities, but now many of them are reaching the end of their useful lives.

We were very surprised to see that the federal government might be preparing—we hope so, in response to the representations made by the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel—to change its approach and go through the official channel which is the National Assembly of Quebec, rather than taking it upon itself to deal directly with municipalities.

The national securities commission has the same potential for intrusion. This idea has been around for quite a while and the previous government mentioned it in some of its documents. The government justifies the notion that we need a national securities commission, even though securities are regulated by the various provincial legislatures, by saying it is a question of mobility, of a single market, and the need for a national commission, despite the opposition of the Quebec finance minister.

Ms. Monique Jérôme-Forget addressed this issue at the last federal-provincial conference of finance ministers. The parties in the National Assembly of Quebec even passed a unanimous motion. Despite all that, the government is preparing to override the will of the Quebec National Assembly.

We are also disappointed that there are basically no positive steps in this budget for people looking for a job. For the first time in many years, the months of January and February saw mounting unemployment rates. More and more of our fellow citizens are looking for work and the unemployment rate is rising.

*Government Orders*

When Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, the hon. member for Winnipeg, was the minister responsible for reforming employment insurance, he introduced a reform to change unemployment insurance to employment insurance. I was in the House at the time and we predicted that large numbers of people would end up being disqualified by the measures we were voting on. Our view proved correct because only about one working person in two now qualifies for employment insurance.

In some regions it is clearly more difficult to qualify. We do not think it makes any sense to increase the amount of time for which benefits are received by five weeks if the requirements for entering the system are not amended.

The Bloc Québécois said there should be a single rule to qualify, that is, a minimum qualification rule. Everyone who worked 360 hours in the previous year should qualify for employment insurance, regardless of regional employment rates.

• (1520)

We also repeatedly suggested that the benefits our fellow citizens receive should be increased. At the present time, the insurance system covers 55% of a person's earnings. We suggested increasing this to 60%. We also wanted to eliminate the distinctions between new entrants and re-entrants to the labour force. In addition, we wanted to make sure that related persons were not presumed not to deal with each other at arm's length. We fought as well to make it possible for self-employed workers to qualify for the employment insurance system. We hope too that the amount our fellow citizens receive from the system could be determined on the basis of the 12 best insurable weeks.

The budget is therefore disappointing. It turns its back on whole groups of people who were hoping for some help. So we are obviously tremendously disappointed. We are disappointed too by the fact that the tax cuts in it are very poorly targeted. There are not many tax cuts for the middle class. There are some for the upper middle class, but not for people with incomes under \$25,000 a year, or even \$40,000 or as much as \$50,000, if the first eligible tax rates are considered. This is therefore not a budget for the middle class as we know it and experience it in our various ridings.

It is a budget—as the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert said several times—that lets down our artists. We know that artists are the soul of our societies. We know that if we want creativity, we have to make funds available. I am not an artist personally. I do not have much talent in that regard. I am sometimes asked to sing in seniors' clubs and my voice is not all that bad, actually, but I would not presume to say I am an artist.

As the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert said, the government has abandoned artists. We have repeatedly asked for the studies of the various programs that were cut just before the election campaign to be made public. I must say that I find absolutely spineless, cowardly and inconsistent this idea to carry out cuts without allowing parliamentarians to evaluate their relevance. It would have been advisable for the minister to present those studies. I am very pleased with the initiative by my colleague for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, who is our heritage critic. With the backing of some hon. members on the committee, she will be presenting a motion to invite artists, people from the artistic community, to come and speak

of the difficulties they are encountering as a result of the policies adopted by the Conservative government.

We are also disappointed that there is nothing in this budget to bolster, to add a bit of substance, to this recognition, to date an extremely hollow recognition, of the Quebec nation. That is why the members of the Bloc Québécois have introduced, or in some cases will be introducing, bills that will allow the creation of the Conseil québécois de la radio et de la télédiffusion. If there is any real desire to recognize the Quebec nation with all its distinctive features it is also important to allow Quebec to opt out of the Multiculturalism Act. As hon. members are well aware, there is consensus in the National Assembly. When they were in power, both the Liberal Party and the Parti Québécois rejected the multiculturalism model in favour of interculturalism. This policy was adopted in the National Assembly by Robert Bourassa.

• (1525)

Why are we rejecting this concept of multiculturalism? We know very well who the French speakers in North America are.

My time has expired? If that is the case, I will be pleased to answer questions and I hope there will be many.

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I hope that you still recognize me after all the years that I have spent here. I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech. He is a talented orator. I have heard many others speak about this as well. Even if he is not a talented artist or singer, I am sure that he would be able to hold his own in a discussion on the topic.

That being said, I would like to hear him speak about the two week waiting period. I am sure that in his riding, where poverty definitely exists, this two week waiting period really hurts his constituents and the people who work in different businesses. Perhaps he could tell us a bit about this. He could also tell us what the five extra weeks of employment insurance would do for his riding since, in my view, people will have already found work. I would like to hear his comments about this.

• (1530)

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her very pertinent question. I would also like to reassure her that there is not a single parliamentarian here who would not know who she is, given how well-known her contribution to this House is.

She is right to remind us that the employment insurance system, as we know it, does not offer the protection that it was constitutionally created to offer. We know that employment insurance was constitutionally amended. She is right to say that the problem is not so much in the five extra weeks. Obviously, those who can benefit from it are free to enjoy it. However, when close to 50% of people cannot qualify for benefits because the number of hours required by the system is too high, the provision to add weeks is astonishingly unsatisfactory.

*Government Orders*

I hope, as she does, that the economy will improve and that our constituents will find work. However, economists think that the recession could last throughout all of 2009 and that our economy will not get back on track until the American housing sector rebounds. In this context, we have to hope that the amendments repeatedly proposed by the Bloc will be adopted.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned his interest in the arts and his interest in some kind of performance. I look forward to hearing him perform someday.

I know members of his party and my party have been very concerned about the arts and culture and the funding the Conservative government has provided to those organizations across Canada as well as for Canadians to travel overseas to showcase the arts and culture of Canada and Quebec.

Could the member comment further on the cuts the Conservatives have made, and which they refuse to restore, to programs like the trade routes program and the promart program, which were very important?

I understand the Minister of Canadian Heritage, in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage the other day, also floated the idea that CBC/Radio-Canada might soon have to start carrying paid advertising on its programming to pay for its services. I know this would be a huge setback to public broadcasting in Canada. Could he respond to that development?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his friendship. He will obviously have to be patient when it comes to hearing me sing. But who knows what the future holds?

In any event, during the election campaign, I met many of our citizens who talked to us about the impact of the cuts to culture, not only on those who wish to do exhibits or shows abroad but also on those working in studios who need help to market their creations and purchase equipment. We are obviously disappointed.

Once again, the bottom line is this. If a self-respecting government wants to cut several millions of dollars from a sector as vital as the arts, we are entitled, as parliamentarians to know the reasons for its decisions.

Why does the government refuse to release the studies on which its decision is based? That was the intent of the motion put forward at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

[*English*]

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to a bill that was only tabled on Friday. The bill contains rather substantial and vast changes to legislation, which would normally pass through the process of input by parliamentarians and the Canadian public.

For the purposes of brevity and the time allotted to me, I want to talk most specifically about an area I am familiar with, as are those who have worked with me for the past 15 years or so, and that is the area of competition policy.

The 500 page document, known as Bill C-10, contains within it about 50 pages amending the Competition Act. For most of us here, it may seem very arcane legislation, but for those of us who have worked on it we know full well that there are a number of stakeholders, views and ideas that germinate from an idea as to how our economy functions.

The last time a significant undertaking of the Competition Act took place was in 1986. In fact, its origins can be traced back to 1981, when the Business Council on National Issues wrote a report recommending a number of changes to the former Combines Investigation Act, which was seen as highly punitive and not very helpful toward promoting the competitive process. That was a very different generation. We know that the 1986 amendments, which took years of consultation, were also predicated on the Macdonald Royal Commission, a commission that very bluntly stated that Canada should accept a higher level of concentration in order to compete with the rest of the world. This is reflected in at least one particular document by the Red Wilson committee last year, and I will get to that in just a moment.

Since then, a number of attempts have been made to amend the Competition Act. We have led many industries to unacceptable levels of concentration, such as the pharmaceutical, food and oil and gas industries, particularly the downstream of the gasoline industry, with which I am somewhat familiar and in which I have a small and slight interest.

I can say with some certainty that amendments I have tried to bring forth to the Competition Act have been very hard-fought, for and against, by members on all sides of the House and a number of stakeholders more often than not representing the competition bar. So the public can understand what that means, it means only the largest of companies that have benefited from a competition act, arguably written by very large enterprises, have been able to take advantage of this. Some of our brightest minds, who articulate and are concerned and concentrated in competition policy, happen to be those representing well-endowed, well-financed and very well-placed large corporations in this country.

It is not surprising we have a Competition Act that has led to the eclipsing of competition in a number of areas. In regional monopolies, I cite the energy industry. One would be familiar with Superior Propane, which was allowed to use a loophole in the Competition Act, under the efficiencies defence, to create a virtual monopoly in the area of propane. The evidence of that is right across the country. We have re-sellers selling a company from one particular company.

*Government Orders*

Given the significance and the battles, particularly on the government's side, in its former Reform Party, the Canadian Alliance and the former Conservative Party, and given the advantage the Americans have of telling the world how much energy they have, one would think some of the recommendations that came out of the appointed Red Wilson committee of last year, which the government appointed, would at least be given the opportunity to be challenged or given the time of scrutiny in our legislative bodies in order to object to any changes to the Competition Act, or even suggest that we could have an oil price monitoring agency that would give Canadians transparency and provide it on a day-to-day basis. However, that is not the case.

We have before us a rather dramatic and significant change to a very important lever in economic policy in one foul swoop. Arguments on both sides are coming out now. Some say it is too dramatic and too drastic, while others have suggested it is too little, too late. I tend to be in the camp of too little, too late.

Let us be very clear about what the changes entail. They entail some restrictions in terms of how we look at conspiracy, price fixing and collusion. I agree with those, with respect to the removal of the test of undue influence. However, I am most concerned by the fact that there is a number of measures, recommended by those who have attended, that have now found their way into law, or will find their way into law should we accept the bill.

It is as if we have decided that we cannot withstand the various arguments about the need to ensure we get competition policy right and modernize it to reflect the fact that we are a nation in which many of our major industries are highly concentrated. Many of those decisions are made overseas.

● (1535)

My first concern is about the process. This is the biggest undertaking in a generation. It was certainly done without great consultation, post the depositing of this legislation. The last, of course, in 1986, took effect after a number of years of consultation and, as I indicated earlier, was predicated on intensity and concentration. This time I think it is fair to say that what is proposed here, right or wrong, does not have the benefit of input.

I am concerned about several points in the competition amendment sections. In my view the threshold in deciding values is too high. That is a decision that has been made here that if we are going to determine a foreign takeover or a merger, we are going to look at the issue of threshold. Right now it has not been changed since 1986, when it was some \$400 million. It is proposed that it go incrementally up to \$1 billion in the next couple of years.

All that would have been fine last year, but the economy has changed. What is promoted in this bill and the budget which underlies it, and I note the finance minister has put an emphasis on that, really describes the fact that there is declining value, which means that there may be opportunities in the private sector for assets to be acquired at fire sale prices.

I think it is clear that when businesses and companies might be had for a lot less, the last thing that needs to be done is increasing the threshold. That might have been applicable last year when prices for everything were fairly high, but this year we seem to be dealing with

bargain basement prices. I think it is important for us to recognize that it may be the wrong prescription at precisely the wrong time.

Regarding merger review and the Competition Bureau, this is asking that the time in which a merger takes place be somewhat complementary to the United States. There is one distinct difference between antitrust legislation in the United States and here in Canada. That is one of the reasons that in the gasoline industry we see a lot of competition down there and here we do not. The reason is simply this, it is properly resourced. The Competition Bureau is now being asked to look at mergers without the concomitant resources in the budget or in this plan to ensure that it can be effective and prevent the competitive process from being eliminated.

The second point is that we talk about administrative monetary penalties. If this party or another party, and I am referring to a business, decides to put another party out of business in a scheme to be anti-competitive under abuse of dominance or under conspiracy provisions, under reviewable matters, the damage is not in stopping the activity from taking place. It is that the company that has offended is subjected to an administrative monetary penalty which goes into the pockets of the government as opposed to addressing the aggrieved party, as it is done in the United States and in many other parts of the world, where we actually provide damages.

It is a significant difference between ourselves and the United States. We have tried to model part of the legislation on the American model, but we are not prepared to give an effective defence to companies in Canada that may find themselves the object of a proven anti-competitive act. Of course, once the damage is done, the government gets the money, the company is out of business, and the competitive process is damaged forever.

It is not lost on some of us who have studied this that these are some of the illustrations of ideas that should have come out in a proper and normal process in which bills are debated, bills are brought before committees, and experts are allowed to give testimony before they pass the acid test of change.

I can say that there are changes in here that I support, but a lot that I cannot. I will continue on that point.

The Red Wilson committee also talked about the need in foreign review to look at something that might be contrary to Canada's interest as a test for rejecting or accepting a foreign takeover of a company versus the net benefit to Canadians.

This is rather nebulous because it does not tell us what is contrary to the Canadian interest. I can understand that from a security point of view. Some will remind us of the case of Minmetals. It is a far weaker standard in protecting that Canadian interest, let alone the competitive interest in this country, than the net benefit. The net benefit must accrue to Canadians.

It seems to me that we have tried to cast too far a line in terms of trying to attract international investment. We may lose the opportunity to demonstrate that we are prepared to stand up first for businesses that are going to be making investments in Canada. In my view no other nation would consider the test of contrary to our national interest over the net benefit. There may be arguments to that effect, but we will not hear those arguments, neither in this House nor in committee nor among Canadians.

*Government Orders*

The other area that concerns me is the area of foreign ownership of transportation, particularly with respect to pipelines. Many of those pipelines were made by public investments. These are public pipelines given to the private sector for a song as part of an agreement to create national energy efficiency and now given as part of a potential takeover by foreigners. I think it is a concern.

• (1540)

I mentioned administrative monetary penalties, but there is nothing in this that talks about the ability to tell Canadians on a day to day basis what the energy picture is or what the consumption picture is in Canada. Every day, starting Wednesday morning at 10 o'clock and 10:30 a.m. the Americans and the world would know where countries are with respect to energy. That could have been in this bill. It is not. It ought to be. This bill certainly needs to be looked at, but it is the wrong time to be proposing this.

• (1545)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed in this new Liberal-Conservative coalition. It is a gross understatement to say that I am disappointed. The budget presented to the House and passed by this new coalition fails the people of London—Fanshawe as it fails all Canadians.

I would like to outline the problems I have with the budget and in particular how it fails to address the following: infrastructure and housing, energy and the environment, employment insurance and women.

I think it is particularly important to highlight the specific impact that this budget is going to have on my riding of London—Fanshawe and surrounding communities. Our area is particularly dependent on the manufacturing sector. We had desperately hoped this budget would give it a much needed boost. Unfortunately, the budget is a missed opportunity to implement a made in Canada procurement policy that would have benefited the area.

As we all have heard, our military is making a purchase of \$250 million in trucks from Texas while the same company is laying off hundreds in Chatham, Ontario. This is an absolute insult to Canadian workers. We need to have a made in Canada policy. We need a government that is willing to have a procurement policy that accesses the goods and services provided by Canadians, and that creates and maintains jobs in our communities.

I am pleased to say that the Conservatives did not get everything wrong. In response to NDP pressure the budget commits to the creation of the southwestern Ontario regional development agency. This agency which was proposed in the 2008 NDP platform would be able to develop a focused and productive manufacturing sector in our area. Unfortunately, this was not paired with a commitment to invest in the environment and our future.

A good example of intelligent investment in the environment and jobs would be an investment in more fuel efficient cars, something that would assist the struggling auto sector and help the London area get a jump start on the new green economy.

Overall, the Prime Minister's plan lacks any real green initiative. His plan on clean energy includes clean coal which we all know is not environmentally friendly. The actual investment in clean energy

is less than 1% of the total stimulus package, about four times less per person than the U.S. plan.

There is money for nuclear energy and the unproven technology of carbon capture storage. Big polluters like the oil companies once again will be receiving breaks with this budget. It brings back the accelerated capital cost writeoffs for the fossil fuel industry. While the budget does include a green infrastructure fund, it is slight on details or criteria. This fund still requires matching funds from cash strapped municipalities. For many communities around London it will be difficult to tap into the fund because the money is not there at the local level to match the federal dollars.

It is reminiscent of the 2007-2008 \$33 billion building Canada fund that never flowed because municipalities could not fund their share of the projects.

The home renovation program included in the budget has no mention of energy conservation measures or savings. In particular, there is no support for renovating or retrofitting the large rental housing stock in the area.

For the many people in London who are currently out of work and struggling to find a new job, real and positive changes to employment insurance eligibility are badly needed. Sadly, this did not happen in the budget and many Londoners will have no help during this economic downturn. It really speaks to the priorities of the Conservative-Liberal coalition. The budget includes \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts and only \$1.15 billion for the unemployed.

Sadly, in this budget, the poorest Canadians will see no real benefit. The budget does not include any increase in the national child benefit supplement or Canada child tax benefit for children from the poorest families. It provides nothing for families with incomes under \$20,000. Imagine that. It provides nothing for the poorest families. The budget provides only \$36 more a month for families with incomes under \$35,000. It does not include any action to improve public pensions or shore up employer pension plans. It does nothing to address skyrocketing tuition and debt loads for post-secondary students and does not include any money to create child care spaces.

Canada ranks last among developed countries for access to child care and early learning. This is just shameful and these failures have the greatest impact on women.

*Government Orders*

• (1550)

The budget that is supposed to stimulate the economy will only plunge the government into debt. Twenty billion dollars in personal tax reductions over the next six years will have a negligible impact on spending and will provide minimal stimulus to the economy. What we need are smart investments.

According to the government's own figures, for every dollar in corporate tax cuts we get a 20¢ improvement to the GDP. Personal tax cuts create about a 90¢ improvement to the gross domestic product. Infrastructure spending creates a \$1.50 improvement to the GDP. Other measures to help low income Canadians provide a \$1.50 improvement to the GDP. As we can see, investments should be made to help low income Canadians, not corporations.

Investing in much needed infrastructure will do more for the economy than personal tax cuts, particularly since personal income tax cuts to the richest Canadians end up in savings instead of supporting job creation. According to the Canadian Labour Congress:

Corporate tax cuts are a poor way to create jobs and help troubled industries because they are of no use to companies losing money, and have little or no impact on real investment.

The new Conservative-Liberal coalition is not making smart investments. Instead of investing in Canadians who need it the most, the Conservative budget is focusing on corporate handouts.

I would now like to focus on the 51% of the population that the budget ignored. Women are not mentioned once in the budget. Some of the more critical issues New Democrats have with the budget stem from the fact that it maintains the attack on pay equity that was announced in the fall economic statement. The bill would create more obstacles for women seeking equal pay for work of equal value. The most vulnerable, 68% of women, will receive little benefit from budget 2009, with 40% seeing no benefit at all.

Sixty-five per cent of women remain ineligible for employment insurance. Improving eligibility for part-time and seasonal workers is essential to women. The budget failed to do this. It failed women. There is no money in the budget to address violence against women or poverty reduction strategies. Bill C-10 attacks women's human rights. The new public sector equitable compensation act is not pay equity. In fact, it attacks pay equity and is the antithesis of the recommendations made from the 2004 pay equity task force.

This new bill does not replicate provincial bills from Manitoba, Ontario or Quebec. It is completely different. The bill does not establish a pay equity commissioner to oversee its implementation and deal with complaints. It does not require the employer to set aside funds for increases in women's salaries.

The most shocking difference between the bill and the pay equity laws of Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec is that pay equity negotiations in Bill C-10 are not separate from collective bargaining.

Human rights cannot be negotiated. Pay equity negotiations in provincial legislation all occurred separately from the collective agreement bargaining process, as they should. Furthermore, this legislation is punitive and spiteful. If passed, a union could be fined \$50,000 for helping one of its members file a pay equity complaint.

The bill would also remove pay equity protection from the human rights act for public sector employees. The current pay equity regime is costly and lengthy, but the current and past governments are to blame for spending millions of dollars and many years challenging pay equity cases. Women deserve better.

It is not just New Democrats who take issue with the impact the budget will have on women. The National Council of Women of Canada has voiced particular concern with access to EI. It argues that:

And women, who have traditionally earned less than men, are at greater risk of becoming a welfare or homeless "statistic", particularly as they age, if you take into account the fact that fewer and fewer women over age 45 are qualifying for EI.

It is critical that we improve access to employment insurance, especially in this tough economic period.

I want to point out what the YWCA stated in regard to "Investment in Social Infrastructure and Social Capital":

Community recreational facilities, hospitals, public spaces, social housing, health centres and schools comprise social infrastructure that secures the health and safety of women and their families and the viability of communities.

This is absolutely what we should be doing. It is what Bill C-10 should have been doing. It is unfortunately not contained in the bill. I do hope that members of the House will see fit to reject the budget because clearly it has rejected the welfare of most Canadians.

• (1555)

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite made an eloquent speech. However, I want to point out a couple of errors, and I am only going to take a moment to that.

Being that I am a woman of Métis descent, I want to point page 96 of the budget that speaks to the child care issue as raised by the member. Perhaps she has not read the budget. It clearly states:

Raising the level at which the National Child Benefit supplement for low-income families and the Canada Child Tax Benefit are phased out, providing a benefit of up to \$436 for a family with two children.

Therefore, we do mention the child care component, yet she had indicated we did not.

Did the member also read page 100? It speaks to maternity and parental benefits for the self-employed, again mentioning women who the member indicated were not included in the budget.

Then page 105 speaks to aboriginal Canadians. We all know aboriginal women are some of our poorest and most vulnerable. I would encourage her to read that page, where we take care of their needs as well.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I must disagree with the member opposite. These oblique references simply do not address the problems that face women.

*Government Orders*

I point out the chart on page 110 in the same document that she suggests I have not read. The chart makes it very clear that the changes being made to the child tax benefit will glean nothing for families that earn less than \$20,000 a year. If there were any real intent on the part of the government to make a difference in the lives of women and their children, families and community, it would have provided something for families earning less than \$20,000.

I would like to hear rationale in terms of what on earth the government was thinking when it excluded the poorest families in the budget, the families that struggle most in society in a time of profound economic insecurity, and did not provide any help for children and their parents.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the member does not mind if I take this opportunity to say something I forgot to say in my speech.

Danny Williams has suggested he feels alone in not being consulted and having this dramatic change. I would like him to know that people from as far away as the Yukon understand his point and he is not alone in not being consulted. I am sure the member will remember when the Conservatives, in their first term, cut Status of Women offices, tourism, museums and literacy, of all things. What we heard in spades about those cuts was that there had been no consultation. They were done out of the blue. They might have been made more acceptable, but they were done totally out of the blue.

Maybe the member can carry on with the good areas she covered about women and comment on how these dramatic changes are done without consultation with the women involved.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad my colleague mentioned Premier Danny Williams. I do not know if he knows, but in the last election Premier Williams supported me. He endorsed my candidacy. I have yet to thank him publicly and would like to take the opportunity to do so now.

With regard to the lack of consultation, it is absolute with the government. We know from what was done to Status of Women Canada, that it clearly did not talk to women across the country. Once research, advocacy, lobbying and the mandate to pursue equality for women was removed from Status of Women Canada, there was an incredible outpouring of concern.

I heard from women from across the country. They were perplexed because they could not understand how any government could come up with policy if it did not consult or make use of the research that had been conducted by women's groups across the country. They were angry because all access had been cut off in terms of their needs in the community. Consult, no—

• (1600)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about Bill C-10, Budget Implementation Act, 2009. This bill opens the door to the deregulation of foreign investments—which then opens the door to foreign control—without taking into consideration the economic interests of Quebec and Canada. As well, this bill allocates funds

through bills which are poorly targeted, notably in terms of social housing, and which are poorly distributed, as demonstrated by the community development trust fund. The Bloc Québécois will therefore vote against this bill, and I would like to explain some of our reasons.

I will start by talking about the money that has been taken away from artists. The government keeps saying that it is giving more money for cultural endeavours. Speaking from experience, my riding has many artists. But these artists have no funding to go and get the awards they receive outside Canada. That was the case recently: a filmmaker in my riding won an award for the best full-length documentary at the Breaking Down Barriers film festival in Moscow. With no funding available in Canada, Mr. Langlois' trip to Russia to pick up his award had to be funded by the American embassy. It is false to say that they have given more money. Perhaps more money was promised, but it has not been put back into the arts programs that were cut. There is still a shortfall, and that shortfall will still exist until the money is put back in. This budget does not meet the needs of artists. They will continue to have these needs, such as the need to leave the country to accept awards or go abroad to perform in order to get future contracts.

In general, this budget clearly demonstrates that the present government has not grasped the urgency of the situation and has taken only a very few emergency measures of the sort that would have resulted in immediate new revenue in the real economy.

I am thinking of the money that could have gone immediately to people who lose their jobs. When people lose their jobs, they get nothing for the first two weeks. If they did get some money, they would not tuck it away for a rainy day. They would plough it back into the economy, and that would get the economy moving right away.

I am also thinking about the short and medium term assistance for job losses among workers aged 55 and up when companies close down. That is not in the budget. We have been calling for this for a long time and that money would also have ended up back in the economy within a week.

Extra money added to the guaranteed income supplement for seniors would also have been promptly reinvested in the economy. Those people are not putting their money into savings.

Immediate assistance to the struggling manufacturing and forestry sectors to retain jobs would also have been money ploughed back directly into the economy.

Farmers are in immediate need of direct aid, but the programs will provide money in a few months or a few years. We will see the results in the long term.

There was also need for immediate assistance to small business and the green economy. They have talked about the green economy, but are they immediately going to create small and medium enterprises, SMEs, that are prepared to go into action? No, all that is being set aside for infrastructure. Now, we are not opposed to the idea of municipal or provincial infrastructure funding, but the government has dragged its feet on this for so long that we feel that the economy cannot be helped immediately with such measures.



*Government Orders*

We can see the thinking of the Conservatives, with their insensitivity to the common man, but their high sensitivity to high finance. Yes, they have helped the banks, they even helped them before the budget, to the tune of \$75 billion, which is nothing to sneeze at. But had only a few billion dollars been invested immediately into the economy, that would have made a huge difference.

• (1605)

Two weeks for unemployed workers is too much, but \$75 billion for big banks, that is just fine, especially considering they are the ones who created the financial crisis.

One part of this bill is particularly dangerous. It has to do with amending the Customs Act. Part III of the bill amends the Customs Act, on the one hand, in order to eliminate duties on a range of equipment and products used in manufacturing and on the other hand—which affects me directly—in order to amend the tariff treatment of milk proteins. I have been dealing with this problem for some time now in my riding: milk proteins enter the country subject to little, if any, customs charges.

Concerning tariffs on milk proteins, the federal government is issuing this regulation to comply with a Canadian International Trade Tribunal ruling. However, the government must immediately get the situation under control. This dispute allowed a Swiss company, Advidia, to challenge the regulation directly to the tribunal. The Bloc believes that this regulation cannot be opposed, since its intent is that we comply with the ruling from the CITT and the Federal Court of Appeal.

Nevertheless, we will continue to fight to ensure full protection of the supply management system. It is very important for the dairy producers in my riding, in Quebec and in Ontario. We will continue to pressure Canada's lead negotiators at the WTO to ensure that no concessions are made that could in any way contribute to the collapse of supply management. We will keep a close eye on negotiations to take full advantage of article XXVIII of the GATT. Lastly, we will monitor the case currently before the Federal Court of Appeal concerning cheese composition standards.

In addition, Quebec and Canada produce very high-quality yogurt, and manufacturers are afraid that Canada will not adopt the standards needed to maintain that quality. People who eat yogurt are entitled to quality products. The government must see to this and not leave private enterprise in the lurch, as some would like to do.

These three things are crucial to the future of the supply management system in Quebec and Canada. They are enormously important to us, and we are going to work as hard as we can to make sure they are not neglected.

I would like to touch on another issue, and that is housing. The budget implementation bill provides for a one-time investment of \$1 billion over two years to renovate social housing and vaguely increase energy efficiency. The budget would have been the perfect opportunity to introduce a green economy, put it to work and get it involved in these renovations. But the government did not do that, which is too bad. The Conservatives talk vaguely about the green economy, but there is nothing about it in the budget.

In its budget, the government provides \$400 million over two years to build social housing for low-income seniors. That is good. It also gives \$75 million for disabled persons, aboriginal peoples and people in the north, which is also good. But what is there for families who need social housing, the working poor, people who are working and cannot afford regular housing, but might be able to some day? There is nothing for them.

The government's philosophy is not to help with social housing. It has found a way to help just a small proportion of people in need, instead of helping the majority, such as single people, those who have lost their jobs, people who are depressed or people who need a place to live.

• (1610)

For social housing, the government is providing half of what—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We have to move on to questions and comments. The hon. member for Churchill.

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a very specific question about what is happening in the Canadian economy. What does he see in his region?

I know that people in my riding of Churchill, in northern Manitoba, are losing their jobs. They see nothing in this budget that meet their needs in terms of their experience with housing or employment insurance,

I would like my colleague to share with me some specific examples of what is happening in his region and say why this budget does not address the situation.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very relevant question. In my part of the country—and probably in hers as well—we need social housing for the homeless, especially in the country since there is a fair amount in the cities.

Since 2001, funds have been allocated for the homeless. This has more or less met the needs in the big cities. But in small towns, in outlying areas and in the regions, we are not at all meeting the needs of people who have lost their jobs or who are depressed and need housing, maybe temporarily, that is built and subsidized by the government.

At present, people in the regions who lose their jobs move to the big cities, put a strain on municipal resources and leave behind their family ties in order to find social housing.

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted the member outlined the disgraceful record of the government related to supply management, as also so brilliantly delineated by the oratory of the member for Malpeque.

When the member talked about culture, it really struck a chord with me. I wonder if he is as angry as we are with the responses we are getting from the Minister of Canadian Heritage who gives the impression that the government has not cut culture or that it has given more to culture when the cuts that we all keep asking about are the cuts in the programs for international marketing of our artists.

*Government Orders*

Thousands of people marched across Quebec and the rest of Canada. The artists are not all wrong. These programs were cut and they have not been reinstated. The museum exhibition program, which took exhibits so that Canadians outside Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver could see our wonderful heritage and the tremendous historical exhibits we have, was cancelled and never replaced.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question, which I find most pertinent. It is indeed important to revisit the cultural sector, one which has already suffered cuts and continues to do so.

The government is determined not to restore programs that it deems, wrongly, to have been inefficient. If the efficiency and the administration of the program needed changing, the government ought to have done so. We want to keep those programs.

The minister insists on telling us he has put in more money. That is not what we want to know. We want to have the funding back that was there before, in programs that were in place and were useful. Artists liked those programs.

What I am hearing in my riding is just what my colleague has said: artists are dissatisfied with the cuts to their exhibitions and even their opportunities to seek work abroad.

•(1615)

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member mentioned the importance of renewable energy to his constituency. I wonder if he could tell the House what kind of renewable energy Quebec is interested in and what the budget should provide.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** I thank my colleague for this new question, because renewable energy is a topic very close to my heart.

In my riding, there are people on the leading edge in developing new energies, particularly passive and active solar energy. They are working on equipment that could be distributed and sold, and incorporated into buildings, even existing 10- to 15- storey social housing blocks. They are also working on extremely high efficiency windows.

There is, therefore, a lot of work that could be done. People are also working increasingly on geothermal power in particular. This is the energy of the future. It is non-polluting. It is the only energy that is hazard free, unlike nuclear and all other energy sources. For retrofitting social housing, for reducing the economic and tax burden on governments for maintenance, geothermal energy is the answer.

[*English*]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once again it is my privilege to address this budget on behalf of the residents and constituents of Vancouver Kingsway and all British Columbians and Canadians.

In general, this is a budget that can fairly and only be described as one of missed opportunities and misplaced targets. All Canadians know that the Canadian economy has, for months and months, been in need of stimulus that works on behalf of families. The budget

could have been much more effective at providing this stimulus and much more helpful for Canadians but, unfortunately, once again the Conservative government has put right-wing ideology ahead of good and sound government.

There are a few good things in the budget and I would applaud the government for these measures. There are also some measures that go some distance and, although insufficient, do go in the right direction. However, the many bad aspects of this bill vastly outweigh those and I will point out some of them here today.

We will start with infrastructure. The government claimed that \$12 billion were allocated for infrastructure in this budget, but that is not exactly accurate. This budget ties almost all of that money to matching contributions by other levels of government and, in some cases, to community members themselves, whether those are the provinces, the municipalities or, with the new RInC program, the communities raising funds.

Almost all of the funds targeted for infrastructure are conditional. For instance, I read carefully the language used in the budget and it explicitly says that there could be infrastructure money for the evergreen transit line, the SkyTrain in Vancouver. Although I hope that money will flow, there is nothing in this budget that actually obligates the federal government to do so.

There is a lot of red tape with respect to this infrastructure and a lot of this red tape surrounds the allocation of this money to provinces and municipalities that now must co-operate with the federal government in order to get this money flowing. I suspect, as in previous years, that many of these infrastructure dollars will actually not be delivered, notwithstanding the crowing that has been done by the opposite side that this money will be injected into the economy.

I turn next to science and research cuts. This budget, fairly read, can be said to have disappointed the scientific and research community in this country. Whether it is aerospace, genome research or green technology, such as solar, wind and geothermal to photovoltaic communities, all feel neglected by this budget.

This is disappointing because investing in green infrastructure not only is a positive way to stimulate our economy now and in the days ahead, but it would create the jobs of tomorrow. It is incredibly short-sighted that the government has failed in this opportunity to put moneys into these areas. Instead, it has put its money into what I think are two of the most misguided areas in the environmental movement in this country, and that is in carbon sequestration and in the nuclear energy industry.

From all of the reports and research with which I have come into contact, carbon storage is an unproven technology. And, of course, we all know that the problems with the nuclear industry and the difficulties in dealing adequately with the waste that is produced is no answer, as well as being an incredibly expensive way to generate energy.

The people of this country want a strong and sound environmental policy that focuses on renewable energy such as sun, wind, geothermal and tidal. These are the economic drivers of the future. This is what the Americans are doing in the United States. I deplore the fact that this budget seems to go in a different direction.

*Government Orders*

On tax cuts, just about every economist in the land has been unanimous that broad-based tax cuts are simply a weak way to stimulate the economy. For instance, 80% of the tax cut that goes to a middle class person will be used to pay down debt, be saved or be used to purchase offshore goods which will help to stimulate a different economy than ours. While some of it does in fact make its way into the Canadian domestic economy, a lot of that is leaked and that is why it is not considered to be an efficient use of tax dollars.

There were some good measures and I would pause to commend the government on its tax policy for small business. The increase in allowable income used for the low small business tax rate is a step in the right direction and will be of some use, particularly to businesses in Vancouver—Kingsway.

●(1620)

Employment insurance has to be commented on. I spent 16 years prior to coming to the House representing workers. I spent many hours and many days with people who had been laid off and who had experienced the hardship of losing a paycheque. Without any ideological basis or approach, I can say that the changes to the EI program simply miss the mark. What workers in this country need and deserve when they make an EI claim is to have EI funds applied from the day they lose their jobs, and not a two-week waiting period.

They deserve to have a rate that they can live on. Unlike many members of the House, I would venture to guess, I know what EI is like. I was on employment insurance 18 years ago. It was then called unemployment insurance. The rate I received was \$409 a week 18 years ago. What is it today? It is approaching \$450. There has been hardly any increase at all.

To expect people now to live on a maximum amount of \$450 a week—and many workers get far less than that—simply enshrines a poverty level that I think is actually designed to make it very uncomfortable to be on EI and to force people back to work by making them live on poverty-level wages. These changes that the government has made to EI really do nothing to address this issue.

I also want to point out something that many other members of the House have pointed out already, which is that a shockingly low number of workers who pay into EI actually qualify for benefits. That is not only a national shame, it is a form of governmental fraud.

If a worker pays into an insurance plan and does not actually qualify for benefits, the worker might rightly ask what he or she is paying for. This is an insurance plan. Workers pay into it with their own money, as do their employers, so that when they are unemployed, they can draw on the money that they put into it. When they put money into a plan that at the end of the day rejects them when they make a claim, it is not in any way whatsoever an insurance plan.

These are the changes that Canadian workers and their families in this current economy need to be made to the Employment Insurance Act, and these are precisely the changes that have not been made by the government. Adding five weeks onto the end of a claim that one does not qualify for at low wages is not going to help hardly anyone.

I found out today that the cost to the government of that one change of adding five weeks to the end of unemployed workers' claims is estimated to be \$11 million. A paltry \$11 million has been

allocated to the unemployed workers of this country. When billions of dollars in corporate tax cuts have been given to the banks and to big oil companies that are making a profit, that is a disgrace.

Another matter is housing. In my riding of Vancouver Kingsway, in Vancouver, and in British Columbia there is a crying need for affordable housing. We need more cooperatives, we need more rental stock. We need more social housing for low-income people, housing for seniors, seniors complexes, and housing for the disabled.

While there is some movement in the budget to provide some housing for low-income seniors and the disabled, the rest of the population that needs housing is shut out. That is a serious deficiency in the budget.

Not only that, a national housing strategy would also help stimulate the B.C. forestry sector. At a time when the B.C. forestry sector is experiencing one of the most difficult times in history, we could be stimulating it, putting mills back into operation, putting workers back to work and building the kind of housing Canadians need.

I want to briefly mention that the budget could be used and should be used to help many of the groups in my riding who are working every day to help people, from Collingwood Neighbourhood House to the Multicultural Helping House to the Cedar Cottage and Mount Pleasant neighbourhood houses to the Little Mountain social housing complex. These community-based developments require infrastructure funds, funds that would actually provide shovel-ready capital as well as drastically needed services to the members of our community. I want to take this opportunity to point out their good work to the House. With help from the federal government, we can actually help stimulate the economy in Vancouver Kingsway, in British Columbia and across the country.

I look forward to questions.

●(1625)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member opposite. One of the points he made in his speech was that there was nothing in here for science and technology. I want to remind the member that this budget includes a great investment for science and technology: \$750 million to the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

I have had the privilege of being on site where some of these projects are funded and seeing the good work they do. This is great news in our budget.

There is also \$50 million to the Institute for Quantum Computing; another \$1 billion for clean energy research, development and demonstration projects; and \$87 million over two years for Arctic research.

I would like the member to indicate how he can say there is nothing in here for science and technology.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, the question is not whether there is anything in the budget for science and technology and research; it is whether or not there is sufficient money in the budget for science, research and technology.

If we were to ask the aerospace industry today if it thinks this budget provides enough support for the aerospace industry in this country, it will say no.

It has been notorious in this country over the last week and a half that genome research funding is completely unstable. Scientists and researchers associated with genome research in this country have publicly stated that they are unsure of the stability of the funding for the next couple of years.

I have read this budget. We have done a word search on this budget, and in terms of green technology, “solar power” does not come up once, “wind power” does not come up once and “photovoltaic power” does not come up once. Not one of the technologies that we need for the green technology sector is funded adequately by this budget.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we just have to check the figures on adding a five-week extension to the EI program. The member mentioned \$11 million. My understanding is that over the term of it, it would actually be \$500 million. Also, finance studied what the member suggested in relation to eliminating the two-week waiting period, and that would have only been another \$900 million that could have been allocated from areas he said were not efficient in the budget.

The member started out with infrastructure. I want to ask about an area he did not get into, the process to flow those funds. I wonder if he has heard from his mayors or councillors. In my area, of course, they like the money, but they would prefer it to flow, if it is going to get there faster, through the gas tax mechanism. That has been very efficient. It gets out the door and it is through their priorities. The member for Willowdale has made the same case. Some of the members from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have also made the same case, so it seems to be universal across the country. I am sure the FCM has said this to the Minister of Finance.

I wonder if the member thinks that would be a faster—

• (1630)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway.

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I agree completely that there are more efficient mechanisms to deliver infrastructure to the municipalities and I think sharing the gas tax revenue is a wonderful idea in that regard. It is a program that already exists and it can flow money more quickly. It actually allows the municipalities to get those moneys flowing and working faster.

I have in fact met with some of the mayors in the Lower Mainland. I met with the mayor of Burnaby, as a matter of fact, two weeks ago. I have meetings coming up with the mayor of Vancouver and the mayor of Richmond, who represent different parties, by the way.

Their message is the same. They are saying that in order to access these federal infrastructure funds, they have to match them.

Municipalities generally do not have surpluses sitting there that they can put forward to attract this money. Therefore, one of their problems is that if they want this money, they will have to come up with it somehow, and they will be forced to either borrow the money or raise their mill rates, in which case they will have to raise taxes on their citizens.

I think it is rather deceptive of this government to crow about the tax cuts it is making, only to turn around and compel mayors of this country to raise taxes on their own citizens in order to access the money that this government brags it is making available.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thériault (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak about the implementation of the budget this afternoon.

First of all, this budget is unacceptable for Quebecers. They were expecting great things compared to last January's budget. The Bloc Québécois acted very responsibly and submitted a highly detailed brief containing very realistic measures. These measures would have directly helped the people of Quebec. We thought that we would see these recommendations in the budget. In addition, all of the parties in Quebec's National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion. That motion listed what they wanted to see in this budget for Quebec.

Many people lost out in this budget. First, modifying equalization calculations would deprive Quebec of more than a billion dollars next year and more than two billion dollars the following year.

We had great expectations for economic development. The Conservatives cut the program for NPOs in the regions. This program had proven its worth, and Quebec's economic development organizations helped to ensure that businesses grew and jobs were created in our regions. The Conservatives cut this program. We were expecting, since our country was gripped by an economic crisis, to see new funds and even see this program reinstated since it was such a great help to Quebec's regions.

Over the past months, the elderly have seen their savings and investments melt away. A number of elderly people live below the poverty line and have no other choice but to rely on programs such as the guaranteed income supplement. This budget contains absolutely no increases for seniors living below the poverty line. As well, they are still waiting for retroactive adjustments owed to them. And there is nothing in the budget announcing new money for the elderly who desperately need it.

A recession also means job losses. Easing employment insurance eligibility criteria would have been a boon to the growing number of people who will be losing their jobs during the current economic crisis. The government should have enabled as many people as possible to draw on these benefits. The system should also have been improved by allowing those who lose their jobs to collect benefits immediately. Eliminating the waiting period would have been the best measure for these people.

*Government Orders*

Many of the people losing their jobs are over 55. They have dedicated their lives to the companies that are closing their doors. Many of these people over 55 do not have high school diplomas, and it is becoming more and more difficult for them to retrain. We were looking for improved training assistance and, for those who cannot retrain, an older worker assistance program. During the 2006 election campaign, the Conservatives promised to bring back an older worker assistance program. The Conservatives even mentioned an older worker assistance program in their throne speech. Yet a program to help people who cannot be retrained does not appear in this budget.

•(1635)

Once again—I know I am repeating myself—when plants close, many people 55 and over are forced to empty their pockets, liquidate their RRSPs and sell their houses as a last resort. These older people have to use up the money they saved over the years to use upon retirement. That is not the kind of help we should be giving these people who have contributed so much to our society.

Struggling companies will get no help in this budget. There are measures to help companies, but no refundable credits. The government's measures will not help companies recover if they do not pay taxes. Tax credits are fine, but they only help companies that pay taxes, and to pay taxes, companies have to make a profit. Companies that are on the verge of closing their doors and declaring bankruptcy are the ones running a deficit; they do not pay taxes. I would really have liked to see refundable tax credits for these companies among the proposed measures.

It is all very well to help the financial institutions, but the fundamental need is to help businesses to be viable so that they can keep their workers. Then we would not be seeing the banks repossessing houses and we would not be needing to help the banks deal with a crisis. Levelling up instead of down would allow companies to stay afloat and thus allow people to get and keep jobs in them. That way they could ling their homes and their spending power and get the economy rolling.

With the measures announced in this budget, this segment of the working class will get no help if they lose their jobs.

I represent communities and a riding where there is a great deal of agriculture. At this time people are very disappointed with the budget, because they were expecting help for struggling farmers. The introduction of a \$500 million program over five years does not meet the need, because it excludes risk management. The agriflexibility program does not respond to the numerous demands from Quebec stakeholders and even the Quebec agriculture minister. We know that, had those moneys been allocated, and if they had included risk management, they would have enabled the Government of Quebec to improve its agricultural revenue stabilization program. The Bloc Québécois called for risk management to be included in a program that would really help the producers, who badly need it. It would have enabled many Quebec farms to be productive and we are know that the very foundation of an economy is its raw material.

I am very disappointed to see that agriculture is dying, not only in Quebec, but across Canada as well. In my riding, more than 25% of jobs are directly or indirectly linked to agrifood or agriculture. We

are experiencing huge problems in agriculture at this time, and there are no measures in this budget. The Conservative government has let down the farmers in my riding and in Quebec as a whole.

•(1640)

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment on how the infrastructure funds in the budget would affect her riding. While she is thinking about her answer, I want to make a point on infrastructure that I have made in the past, but I want to make sure it is on the record and that key members hear it. I have been speaking about this for about a year, although I have not mentioned it recently.

I became worried very recently when I heard officials say that there is no policing or delineation of how much infrastructure funding goes to municipalities and first nations. The people of these municipalities have been very well treated in the past in programs by governments. There is a significant amount of money in the budget for infrastructure and they are very happy about that, but they are worried that it is not going to them. There seems to be no plan to make sure that municipalities and first nations, who have to deliver so much infrastructure to their communities and have the smallest tax base to do it, may not get their fair share.

I know that the people who can do something about that are listening. I want to make sure it is on the record so that the very generous funds available do get to the municipalities and the first nations that really need it so they can deliver infrastructure at the local level.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the member for Yukon, for his question. The infrastructure program, as it was presented, will indeed help Quebec, but it will not solve everything.

Furthermore, when I talk about assistance, it is conditional assistance, as we know that the municipalities and the Quebec nation must also put in money, since it is a tripartite program. Many municipalities need to rebuild their infrastructures at this time, but do not have the means to put up a third of the funds needed to access these programs.

As we all know, the surplus is in Ottawa. In this budget, we would have liked Ottawa to invest more than the municipal or Quebec governments in the infrastructure program.

I must add another point. The Bloc Québécois would have liked to see this money transferred to Quebec, especially since, we must not forget, the municipalities fall under Quebec jurisdiction.

Furthermore, Quebec would have been in a better position to run this kind of program. But again, although the infrastructure programs and the money announced are positive measures, only the municipalities that have the resources can take advantage of those measures, which is pathetic.

*Government Orders*

•(1645)

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member two questions.

The first one is on environmental assessments. We now know the government intends to add to the budget that was tabled originally, provisions that will decrease the ability to conduct environmental assessments on certain federal projects. Specifically, amendments will be made to the Navigable Waters Protection Act to so-called streamline the approval process and give more authority to the minister to allow construction without further environmental assessments. I would like to get the hon. member's comments on that.

The second one is on pay equity. The government once again is attempting to remove the ability of the women of this country employed by the public service to pursue pay equity claims before tribunals and courts. I would like to have her comments on that as well.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thériault Thi Lac:** Mr. Speaker, regarding the environment, we all know that the federal government, the Conservative government, is setting us back by about 100 years. It is a 100 year set back in terms of the environment. We have become the laughing stock of the entire planet, because of the Conservative government's failure to act on the environment.

As for my colleague's second question, pay equity is a very important issue and it is appalling to see the Conservative government trampling on women's rights in this area.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Arts and Culture; the hon. member for Windsor West, the Steel Industry; the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Employment Insurance.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this week the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada reported that Alberta personal bankruptcies soared by 27% throughout 2008. In December 2008 alone, personal bankruptcies in Alberta rose 106%. This comes on the tail last week of the reported worst one month job losses on record.

No group is suffering more in the downturn of the economy, certainly in the jurisdiction from which I come, than temporary foreign workers, a program that the government introduced and emphasized when it included changes to the immigration bill, nefariously, in the last budget that it tabled. Again it is putting in inappropriate measures.

I want to share what my constituency office reported to me just last night. Just last night, three cases came in on temporary foreign workers who had been encouraged to come to our country under this program and are now out of work and have been abandoned.

A family of five from Germany came to Canada under the temporary foreign workers program. The father was laid off and is

not able to find employment that meets the narrow criteria of the permits under that program. He was offered alternative employment but is unable to accept it because it is not "carpentry" work. This family is not able to afford the plane fare back to Germany. These people are currently at the mercy of their landlord who is graciously allowing them to stay. They are using the food bank. The other two examples are exactly the same. A worker from India and a worker from another country came to Alberta, were promised jobs and were laid off. There has been no assistance offered to them and there is no opportunity for alternative work.

This budget invests paltry little in creating new well-paying jobs that these persons could fill. Others across Canada are being laid off daily, likely as we speak.

There is no money whatsoever going into the new emerging green economy that every other nation in the western world and other nations are adopting. We are losing ground and we are losing our competitiveness. While we argue about whether the government is adequately caring for people who have been laid off, it is stridently refusing to provide any money to move these workers into a new economy where they could flourish and prosper.

Energy jobs in Alberta are not declining due to environmental red tape as the government would suggest. Quite the contrary, they are disappearing because of the Conservatives' failed policies.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs are being created in other nations due to the new green economy that they have embraced, that the International Energy Agency has embraced, that the United Nations has embraced, that has been embraced worldwide, that President Obama who will be visiting us soon has embraced. We are missing a golden opportunity to exchange policies. We could have open free trade and exchange green products, technologies, awareness and skills.

The budget document purports to be transforming Canada into a new green economy and yet no new money is being provided to foster these technologies. There is zero money targeted to develop, and most important, to actually deploy the renewable energy which creates jobs on the ground. This is despite recent analyses that Canadians could actually meet the majority of their electrical and energy needs through new green energy. There are fabulous reports coming forward, one in Ontario and one in Alberta. As the hon. Minister of the Environment reported, he would like to move toward meeting the majority of Canada's electrical needs from green energy. The reports are showing that we can do it through real green energy, such as solar, wind, geothermal and virtual power, instead of the Conservatives' so-called green energy, which is just more dirty coal-fired power and tar sands.

The abandonment of this sector which is just getting started in Canada and getting a competitive edge, means not only lost economic opportunities to businesses but a lost competitive edge. Many of these businesses are located in my own constituency. Through their own means companies have started up industries to install alternative lighting to save energy. Industries are now operating across North America helping public facilities in the United States and Canada to retrofit public buildings and train their maintenance workers to run these buildings. All are lost opportunities because the government has blinders to the new economy.

• (1650)

What the government is also blind to, and it was evident in the House today, is the lack of understanding of where the world is moving, including our neighbour to the south, the United States of America.

How many references are in the budget on climate change, on giving money to address it? A singular reference. Not one new regulatory trigger has been tabled by Parliament, the single most important measure to actually move us toward the green economy to ensure we do not incur the massive liabilities incurred through climate change. Not one new regulatory trigger and no fiscal incentive are in the bill. The government touts nuclear power as the singular solution to Canada's energy security and climate change goal, and that is absolutely appalling.

Where is the money to develop an energy security policy for Canada? The United States of America has had such a policy strategy and actual legislation in place for some years. Is Canada only going to become the means to meet the United States' energy security, or is the government finally going to move forward and allocate monies so we can move toward developing a strategy for the benefit of Canadians, not just simply to mine our resources and send them south?

On sustainability, the government also says it does not pick favourites, it has broad-brush tools. Well it has picked favourites. In its so-called clean energy fund, it picks out one technology for the coal-fired power industry and for the tar sands, and that is to pour yet more millions of dollars down the well into testing a technology that we have no idea if it works.

The so-called long lists of non-emitting power sources, where are they? They are not being encouraged in any way by the budget.

The government talks about the money it is putting into research and technology. Let me tell members what is being done with research and technology. The Conservatives talk about their innovation fund. I have had calls from across Canada, including leading edge academics who say their money is disappearing. It is being so-called streamlined. What that means is a path from money being put into creating jobs for leading edge scientists and their burgeoning associates and it is going into buying equipment offshore. It is absolutely shameful. Again, we had the opportunity to be leading edge, developing the technologies, marketing them, but this is absolutely lost.

There is nothing in the budget on water. If we talk to any Canadian or anyone around the world and ask them what their most

critical need and concern is, they will tell us it is their disappearing water. It is the fact that water is becoming contaminated.

In my jurisdiction, where we think we have plentiful water, already we are finding water over-allocated in southern Alberta. We are finding a crisis in northern Alberta where the water is declining because of climate change. The glaciers are depleting. There are a good number of people in Canada who depend on those glaciers for their drinking water. Farmers depend on that water to feed their cattle. The industries of Alberta depend on that water, yet there is not one cent, despite the fact there is a clear regulatory mandate on the government to manage water for the benefit of Canadians.

My colleague who spoke earlier asked a question of our colleague from the Bloc about the issue of the intrusion into the budget, nefariously, of amendments to laws. This is absolutely reprehensible. The same kind of measure that was done with the immigration act in the last bill has been repeated with critical environmental laws.

The Navigable Waters Protection Act is one of the most important acclaimed laws in the world. That law was the centrepiece of one of the most important Supreme Court of Canada precedents, which clearly declared that the federal government had clear jurisdiction over the protection of the environment. Now with one fell blow, with zero opportunity for consultation, the government has put that into its budget bill, in a Bush type gesture, so there can be no consultation. Conservatives are taking away the right of affected Canadians, including our first nations, to have the opportunity to discuss the implications of these changes.

• (1655)

These changes are exactly what the government is doing by saying that environmental law is simply red tape. Nefariously, through the budget bill, the government is taking away the opportunity for citizens to come forward and express concern when there are intrusions in their lakes or their rivers—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of State for Democratic Reform on a point of order.

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## POINTS OF ORDER

### ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I was asked a question in question period, dealing with voter identification. After question period, there was a big kafuffle about my answer.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that there were problems with the microphones and with identifying me. In that confusion, I said there was “all party support” for the voter identification bill, but that is not what I meant to say. What I meant to say was “all party report”. If I had more time, I would have certainly recognized the fact that the NDP did not support the government initiative. Other parties did, but not the NDP.

I regret the confusion. I assure the House that it will not happen again.

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for his clarification.

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**BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and related fiscal measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that there has been a rumour going around that the NDP has failed to read the budget. We have just received absolute fact about that. That NDP member has not read the budget. If the member has, she is completely distorting what is in it.

I could cite all day long what this government has done with science and technology.

At the University of Guelph, we have funded a research project that pulls methane gas out of cow manure and what is left is turned into subflooring. That sounds pretty green to me.

At the same university, we have also funded a research project which uses plant fibre as a replacement for oil in asphalt. It sounds pretty green to me.

We are also funding ways to decrease the use of water in the oil sands.

If the member would just read the budget, she would know these are good things for Canadians, but of course the member has already made up her mind. There is no point in having a debate with her because she plans to vote against those green initiatives, and that is shameful.

Will the member now admit that she did not read the budget, or if she did read it, she misunderstood it?

• (1700)

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I do not understand the budget whatsoever. It is my understanding that the monies already allotted for alternative energy will continue, but no new money has been allotted.

It is very clear in the budget that the government is using a streamlining mechanism to take money from programs that do the innovative research and that employ researchers to do the work, including in the Arctic, and simply transferring that over to the innovation fund to buy equipment.

I do not consider that new funding toward a new green economy.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, two government members have talked about science and technology, but I want to put on the record a point that two professors made to me about cuts to the granting councils, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada. In 2009-10 it will be \$17.7 million. In 2010-11 it will be \$43 million. In 2011-12 it will be \$87.2 million.

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I too have been contacted by academics and researchers in my riding.

In addition to the information provided by the hon. member for Yukon, who it is always a delight to hear from, the government is also cutting research monies for the Arctic, at a time when is saying it is going to invest money to ensure the sustainability and environmental protection of the Arctic.

We are taking away money that goes to researchers who look at the impact of industrial activity on the land and on the water, not just in Canada but around the world. These researchers look at the impact of the downfall that falls into the Arctic, contaminating the water and coming out as the north melts. That money is being diverted into building a facility for which they will have absolutely no use.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's point is well taken. I would like her to comment on the following question. The government is not introducing real ways to produce energy without greenhouse gas. On the other hand, we are still talking about research. We have nothing against research, but Canada has been conducting research for 25 years. We are ready to produce. There is no money in the budget for production.

The budget includes money to reduce the amount of water used for the oil sands. But the companies told us a few months ago that they will never be able to use less than six gallons of water per barrel of oil, so we are not going to produce greener energy that way.

I would like to know how far along we are in our search for ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

[*English*]

**Ms. Linda Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear in the budget that the government does not understand our potential to compete in this new green economy. What we are missing is the opportunity to actually deploy technologies that have been invented and developed in Canada, particularly in the Maritime provinces.

It is most regrettable that the majority of members from the government did not take the opportunity to attend the presentation, which I had welcomed them to last week, where very cogent, factual information was presented on these very possibilities.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill. Earlier, when the budget was tabled, I spoke about the agricultural community. Today, I would like to focus on what many people in my riding, Richmond—Arthabaska, have talked to me about: this government's inaction on employment insurance accessibility.



*Government Orders*

Part IV of Bill C-10 pertains to the change in the employment insurance system. The measure the Conservative government decided to take is not bad, but all it did is increase the regular benefit entitlement by five weeks from 45 to 50 weeks, which the Bloc Québécois had long been calling for.

But I wonder why the government decided to set a time limit for this measure? It says this measure will be in effect until September 11, 2010, which means that it is not permanent. All the government did was increase the regular benefit entitlement from 45 to 50 weeks, and it set a time limit on this measure to boot. That is all there is in the budget about this issue.

As far as accessibility is concerned, I have heard comments from a lot of people when I have been out and about on the weekend, or in my riding office on a Friday, about what is in the budget or more so, what is not. It is all very fine to talk of investing in this or that, but the budget must always be looked at as a whole. Overall, no one can say that everything in the budget is perfect, but neither can it be said that everything in it is bad.

However, on the employment insurance issue, frankly it is obvious that we are dealing here with a government that has no sensitivity and no intention of helping people who, in the midst of a time of economic crisis, will end up without a job and with a waiting period imposed on them. More than 50% of people are not eligible for EI even if they have contributed. This situation remains. In a period of crisis, it is worse than ever, which I will demonstrate in the minutes allocated to me.

This bill does not improve accessibility to employment insurance in any way. Still today, the majority of contributors to employment insurance are not entitled to benefits. More than half the people who lose their jobs do not have access to employment insurance, even though they have contributed to it.

The Bloc Québécois has proposed some improvements. My colleague from Chambly—Borduas has introduced a bill, and I will come back to that. We have been proposing very specific improvements for ages, ones which in fact come from the public and from organizations that deal with employment insurance recipients, or at least people who ought to be recipients. As I said, many of these are unfortunately ignored. These are often women who work part time, such as single parents. Or they are young people new to the work force who have not accumulated sufficient hours to access employment insurance. They are also heavily penalized. These are the people telling us there need to be improvements.

One of the main demands is a reduction of the minimum period of qualification, to 360 hours worked, regardless of the regional unemployment rate. As well, increased weekly benefits to 60% from 55%. And we called as well for the abolition of the waiting period, but that we did not obtain.

Especially in times of economic crisis, people must be able to obtain employment insurance benefits as soon as they lose their jobs rather than having to wait for a certain period. If they received their benefits immediately, they could help keep the economy rolling. Someone who is unemployed will look after their basic needs first and will not allow themselves much in the way of luxuries. They will

buy food, pay the rent and do only what is necessary. This measure would allow people to help keep the economy going.

We also propose eliminating the distinctions between new entrants and re-entrants to the work force.

● (1710)

We have to eliminate the presumption that people who are related to one another do not deal with each other at arm's length. We should also allow the self-employed to opt into the system on a voluntary basis. Finally, benefits should be calculated based on the 12 best weeks.

People, especially organizations who advocate for the jobless and the unemployed, have been calling for such measures for a long time. We will table a bill in an attempt, once again, to have the House adopt such measures. This very day, my colleague for Chambly—Borduas came back with a Bloc Québécois bill to improve the employment insurance system.

We know that only a few months ago, the Conservatives denied that there was an economic crisis. We were all in an election campaign. Last September, they felt that there was no problem and no recession on the horizon. The Conservatives had some concerns, but nothing serious. Canada would be protected from everything happening in the world. Our closest neighbour, the United States, was in the midst of an economic catastrophe, but we, we would get through it unscathed. That is what we heard during the election campaign. Luckily, people are not stupid and they knew that if our American neighbour was coughing, we were going to catch its cold. And that is exactly what is happening. I am not happy about that; it is just that we have a responsibility here. The government has an even greater responsibility because it is the one making the final decisions about how to stimulate the economy and mitigate the effects of an economic crisis.

When we deny it, pretend that nothing is happening and put on our rose-coloured glasses, during that entire time, nothing is being done to help the people who lose their jobs during an economic crisis or the industries that are having an increasingly tough time exporting to the United States. The Americans are having problems and will buy fewer of our products. It is a domino effect. We could not close our eyes and pretend that everything was fine.

The economic statement that followed was a real joke. It was an ideological statement. I have always felt that the Conservatives came up with it because they saw that the Liberals' election results were mediocre. They figured that the Liberals would try to build themselves back up because they had been through a difficult campaign with disappointing results. They had debts—\$18 million, some said. At the time, a leadership race was likely. Now the Liberals have decided to get themselves a new leader without going through that process—apparently there is to be a convention in May. Nevertheless, it is clear that, at the time, that is what the Conservatives were seeing. They decided to take advantage of it and kick the Liberals while they were down to make sure they stayed there.

### Government Orders

So the Conservatives came up with an economic statement that did nothing to stimulate the economy or mitigate the effects of the crisis, as I was saying earlier. Instead, they chose to bring in measures that made pay equity negotiable, even though it is a right. A right is not something one negotiates. The Conservatives also raised the political party funding issue. Things like that were not the breath of fresh air people needed to deal with the harsh and painful economic crisis.

It has to be one thing or the other: either the government had no idea what was going on at the time and chose to be optimistic—if that is the case, I would suggest that the government is incompetent—or it wanted to hide the truth from the people. In the end, reality always catches up, and that is what happened.

Now the government cannot deny January's unprecedented surge in unemployment, which rose from 7.3% to 7.7%. That is a two-year high. In January, 26,000 jobs were lost in Quebec. Canada lost 129,000 jobs. I am very worried about this because I am from a region with a lot of small and medium-sized businesses, manufacturing businesses, and that sector has sustained heavy job losses. In January, the manufacturing sector lost 101,000 jobs.

This bill does nothing to improve access to employment insurance. Now we are asking the members of the House to support the Bloc Québécois bill to make up for the government's inaction on this issue.

• (1715)

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion regarding the striking of a special committee on Afghanistan. I move:

That a special committee be appointed to consider the Canadian mission in Afghanistan consisting of 12 members which shall include 6 members from the government party, 3 members from the official opposition, 2 members from the Bloc Québécois and 1 member from the New Democratic Party, provided that the chair shall be from the government party; that in addition to the chair, there shall be one vice-chair; that the members to serve on the said committee be appointed by the whip of each party depositing with the Clerk of the House a list of his or her party's members of the committee no later than February 10, 2009; that the quorum of the special committee be seven members for any proceedings, provided that at least one member of the government party and one member of the opposition be present; that membership substitutions be permitted to be made from time to time, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2); and that the committee have all the powers of a standing committee as provided in the Standing Orders, as well as the power to travel, accompanied by the necessary staff, inside and outside of Canada, subject to the usual authorization from the House.

That the committee shall:

(a) meet regularly with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, National Defence and Public Safety and senior officials so that the special committee can make frequent recommendations on the conduct and progress of Canada's efforts in Afghanistan; and

(b) review the laws and procedures governing the use of operational and national security exceptions for the withholding of information from Parliament, the courts and the Canadian people with those responsible for administering those laws and procedures, to ensure that Canadians are being provided with ample information on the conduct and progress of the mission.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and related fiscal measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment on how the infrastructure programs in the budget will affect his riding. While he is doing that, I want to go on the record, while the Minister of Infrastructure is here, to make sure he gets the message that municipalities and first nations want to ensure they get their fair allotment of the infrastructure funds.

I have been making this case for over a year but I have been worried recently. In talking to officials, they have suggested that there is no policing mechanism to ensure that first nations and municipalities, which have such a huge task of delivering infrastructure and the lowest tax base, get the fair share that they did in the past. The genesis of these programs in the past was to help these junior governments.

I know the minister has met with them, and I appreciate that, and I know there is a generous amount in the budget, but it is important that municipalities and first nations get their fair share to do the jobs they need to do with their limited resources.

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Speaker, the comments made by the hon. member for Yukon were perhaps meant more for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

But one thing is certain, as I was saying in my speech—and I am glad he mentioned this part of the budget—not everything in a budget is bad, nor is everything ever perfect. Although the government would have us believe that it will solve all our problems, that is not the case. Although the Liberals support it, the budget is not perfect. We saw this in question period, as well in the speeches we heard.

However, according to all the experts, in a time of economic crisis, it is completely reasonable to invest in infrastructure. That is one positive aspect of this budget.

I agree with my colleague: this must be done as quickly and straightforwardly as possible. In a time of economic crisis, we cannot wait for endless criteria to be met. The money must be available immediately and quickly for Quebec and for the other provinces, in order to get this work underway.

I spoke with the minister who said himself that any work that is already ready to begin will be given priority. I think that is a very good idea.

• (1720)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague further to something he said regarding what women are going through during this economic crisis. He talked about the fact that many women work in part time jobs. This is their reality, and we see that the government is not responding to it. What is more, we see that the government is taking steps that truly go against the most fundamental human rights enjoyed by everyone, enjoyed by all women in Canada for many years, in the area of pay equity.

I would like to hear my hon. colleague's point of view on the matter.

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that very pertinent question. What we are witnessing is typical of so-called right-wing governments all over the world. In times of economic crisis, as in times of economic growth, right-wing governments adopt a laissez-faire philosophy. We should not expect the Conservatives to take measures to help the most vulnerable members of society. The Conservatives tell people who have lost their jobs to go out and get another one. I once heard the current Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC), when he was minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for Quebec Regions, tell people who had lost their jobs to go and work in Alberta because there was work there. Talk about a heartless thing to say.

As for women, as I said earlier, this would have been a good time—and anytime is a good time—for the government to introduce measures to improve access to employment insurance, because statistically, women most often hold part time jobs.

I said in my speech that pay equity is not negotiable. Pay equity is a right. You do not negotiate a right. Unfortunately, this government does not see things this way.

[*English*]

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to debate Bill C-10, the budget implementation act.

First, on behalf of my constituents of Don Valley East and indeed all Canadians, I would like to express our condolences to the friends and families of the victims of the brush firestorm that has swept across the state of Victoria in southern Australia. As a fellow Commonwealth nation, we share the shock and sadness of the greatest natural disaster in Australian history. Our thoughts and our

### *Government Orders*

prayers are with them and, as parliamentarians, I want to assure the people of Australia that the people of Canada stand ready to assist them in any possible way.

Now on to the topic at hand, the budget implementation act.

My constituents are asking why the Liberal Party has decided to support this budget. The simple answer lies in the fact that in this time of global economic turmoil, Canadians want politicians of all political stripes to work together so that we can put the country back on the road to prosperity. Unfortunately, this has been a bumpy road indeed and it seems that the government continues to hit guardrails at every turn.

First we had an economic update in November that created the greatest political crisis in political history since the King-Byng affair. While the Prime Minister fumbled at the steering wheel, the Conservative government had to face the embarrassment of withdrawing its own economic statement that was penned entirely by partisan zealots in the PMO without any consultation with officials at the Department of Finance. We then learned that instead of running a modest surplus in the coming fiscal year, Canada would, instead, run a deficit of \$64 billion over two years, even before a stimulus package was ever contemplated.

In order to make a meaningful contribution toward the shaping of the budget, Liberals fanned out across the country to consult widely with Canadians in all walks of life. People told us that we must come up with an action plan that would, first and foremost, stimulate the economy and protect the most vulnerable in our society.

I know that it is not in the DNA of the Conservatives to make social housing a priority, but that is exactly what the Liberal Party advocated as an investment in our future. To that end, the Liberal opposition welcomes the following: over \$400 million over two years for the construction of social housing units for low-income seniors; \$75 million over two years for the construction of social housing units for persons with disabilities; \$400 million over two years for new and existing housing stock on first nation reserves; and \$200 million over two years for social housing in the north.

These are the types of constructive contributions the Liberal Party supports. However, the leader of the Liberal Party has made it clear that Liberal Party support is conditional and contingent upon the proper management of taxpayer dollars.

While we do welcome the extension of EI benefits, there is a real problem with access for many workers in my riding of Don Valley East, and in Ontario in general.

In 2006, the City of Toronto commissioned a task force on modernizing income security. It discovered that the first social safety net, employment insurance, is so full of holes that only 27% of workers who pay into the system are eligible to collect benefits. In a prospering economy, that is a serious problem, but in a recession, it is a disaster waiting to happen.

*Government Orders*

Last week I took the opportunity to question the Minister of Human Resources after one of my constituents complained that it is virtually impossible to get through to the EI call centre by telephone. I received assurances from the minister that more resources are being allocated to relieve the call volume, but this speaks to the question of access.

• (1725)

Minimum hour requirements vary from region to region across Canada, but the government must not exclude a certain class of workers who have paid into the system for years yet receive no benefits. Before the federal government begins to download the victims of this recession on to the provinces, I suggest that the Conservatives begin to rethink access to EI benefits.

The Liberal Party also supports raising the national child tax benefit and doubling tax relief provided by the working income tax benefit to encourage low-income Canadians to find and retain jobs.

We also asked for and strongly support a provision that will reduce the minimum withdrawal rate for RRIFs by 25%.

However, as I mentioned earlier, the leader of the Liberal Party has indicated that Liberal support for this budget is conditional and we will be reviewing the government's use of taxpayers' dollars quite closely.

Accountability and transparency are key. As the official critic for national revenue, I must draw members' attention to the results of an internal audit by the Canada Revenue Agency. It revealed that paycheque errors are costing the tax department millions of dollars each year by issuing cheques to people who no longer work for CRA. As of February last year, approximately \$3 million had been paid out to 2,258 employees. This translates into a 5% error rate.

Similarly, the Liberal Party is deeply concerned with how the government will properly account for the home renovation tax credit. This tax expenditure has the potential for disaster and we in the Liberal Party will insist upon proper accountability and transparency mechanisms, because it is possible that people could misuse the system, abuse the system, and leave the taxpayers with a lot of boondoggle.

It is this kind of dismal performance that has driven Conservative allies such as the National Citizens Coalition, an organization once headed by the Prime Minister, to disparage the government for poor management. In fact, the head of the NCC has called upon grassroots support of the Conservative Party, many of whom are already tapped out, to withhold political donations until they see a form of improvement on the part of the government.

I have consulted my constituents from far and wide, and they have insisted that there are major issues they want the budget to address. Some of these issues include protection of the vulnerable, protection of their pensions, protection of the jobs of today, protection of job creation and the jobs of tomorrow, and access by small businesses to credit.

Some of the initiatives the government has taken have been in response to our input to the Minister of Finance. However, 1.2 million Canadians have lost or are facing losing their jobs. Out of that number, only 27% to 30% are able to access EI. For those

vulnerable Canadians, it is important that we as parliamentarians revisit the EI eligibility rules and ensure that in an economic recession, we are there to help people.

The Minister of Finance had committed some funds for access to credit by small businesses, and the Liberal Party as the official opposition will ensure that that money does transfer to the small and medium size businesses.

My time is drawing to a close, so I will now answer questions and comments.

• (1730)

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in my province of British Columbia, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has a long and storied tradition of public service, delivering broad-based community police services to the people of our province. In fact, we are fortunate enough to have the headquarters of the RCMP detachment located within the confines of my riding of Vancouver Kingsway.

The RCMP was promised wage increases by the government. The RCMP officers were counting on those wage increases. However, after the election and with this budget, the RCMP wage increases that those officers were relying on in good faith have been rolled back.

I would like to know what the member's position is on that, as well as on the other collective agreement wage rollbacks that have been slipped in under the cover of this so-called economic action plan, which again simply is an attack on the rights of workers to collectively bargain.

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for asking this question because it is a very valid question. I agree with him that the RCMP was supposed to have received its wage, but it was rolled back. My hon. colleague from Ajax—Pickering posed a question and did not seem to have received a very good response from the minister at that time. I firmly believe that members of Parliament have to ensure that there is a protection of people, that we maintain our word, and we ensure that Parliament respects the rights of people.

• (1735)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member, my good friend from Don Valley East, said the Conservative Party in its DNA does not have social housing. The more I read this budget, it is not in its DNA to support seniors, youth, health care or education.

I want to ask a specific question on EI, if I may. In my neck of the woods in the great city of Toronto, Scarborough, where I come from, I am proud of Ontarians. They work to earn a living. They do not work for unemployment, but in these difficult and unusual times, unfortunately some of them are getting laid off, companies are closing, et cetera.

I want to know, because they are asking me, why are we in Ontario being treated differently in terms of EI than other provinces?

The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities was under the Harris government, which slashed, burned and destroyed Ontario, and now he has come to the federal side. What it took us 12 years to do, the Conservatives have undone in two and a half years. They have literally brought Canada—I was not going in that direction, Mr. Speaker, but I am prepared to go toe to toe with my good friend. It is just that this is not the time nor the place.

Nevertheless, I want to know. Because their understanding is that the same dollar they pay in Toronto is the same Canadian dollar they pay in B.C., Charlottetown or wherever. Why are we treated differently?

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very relevant question, and we have had a lot of questions and concerns about EI.

As I mentioned in my speech, there were people calling my constituency office demanding that we do something to change EI. Access is not available. We have to change rules and Ontario has been shortchanged.

I would like to bring attention to the heckling that was done by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

When the Liberal government was in power from 1993 to 2005, we had to clean up the absolute total mess that the Conservatives had left us. They had left a bankrupt country. IMF told us that we were the economic basket case, and therefore it was important to turn things around. When we have no money, when we are bankrupt, we need to first get our economic health back. Once we get our economic health back, then we address issues.

At that time there were many provinces that were have not provinces and they needed that formula. Now that we have come to an economic crisis, I think it is important that Ontario be treated as fairly as other provinces.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity. I think there was a far better speech in the offing a few minutes ago than may happen now.

I am glad my colleague, the member for Don Valley East, began her speech remembering the folks in Victoria state, Australia, and the terrible fires that are happening there. It is an area that I know very well, having travelled very extensively in Victoria over the years. I know the communities of Healesville, Lake Mary, Gippsland, Beechworth and the neighbouring communities very well. I am constantly thinking of the people who have died and their families, and the people who have faced such terribly destructive fires in the last few weeks.

The budget and Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, are what we are debating now in this House. It comes as no surprise that someone sitting in this corner of the House, a member of the New Democratic Party, will be voting against this piece of legislation, as we voted against the bill.

It comes as no surprise to Canadians because we knew it was going to be a stretch to find a way to support the budget and the government, given its past record, given its complete dismissal of the economic crisis that Canada and the world were facing not so very long ago.

### *Government Orders*

I am not going to make any apologies for saying before the budget was tabled that I was going to be hard pressed to support it. I have lost complete confidence in the government to address the issues that Canadians are facing and to address this economic crisis. Certainly, the budget that is before us and the budget implementation bill have done nothing to restore my confidence or make me change my mind about that. I will make no apologies for the decision I have made in that regard.

If we look at the Conservative budget in the very biggest picture, just how much money, how much of a stimulus is this piece of legislation and this budget going to offer to Canada in this period of economic crisis? Other countries, other international organizations have suggested rates that should be allocated toward appropriate stimulation in this time.

Even at the G20 meeting that the Prime Minister attended last fall, a conclusion was made there that 2% of GDP would be an appropriate level of spending to stimulate an economy and help deal with this economic crisis. We have fallen very short of that in this budget from the Conservative government.

President Obama's American economic stimulus package is at least 3% of the GDP of the United States. The Americans have taken that message from the G20 and actually increased their commitment to helping Americans get out of the troubles that have been caused by the current economic crisis.

In Canada, our economic stimulus package, as offered by the Conservative government, is only .7% of the GDP. That statistic comes from the parliamentary budget officer, a non-partisan officer of Parliament who has looked at the budget figures and looked at those calculations.

That is one third, proportionally, to what the Americans are spending to help Americans deal with this economic crisis, to help the United States get out of the crisis. It is only half of what the G20 recommended and what the Prime Minister apparently agreed to at the G20 meeting.

Even in the very broadest picture that we could look at, this economic stimulus package falls short of what is required by the analysis from experts all around the world to actually deal with the current economic crisis.

The crisis is absolute across this country. That was made very clear with the most recent job loss statistics that came out for the month of January. In British Columbia alone, the net job losses were 35,000 jobs lost in the month of January. That figure of 35,000 jobs lost really does not tell us the full impact of what is going in British Columbia.

The reality in British Columbia is that 68,000 full-time jobs were lost in the month of January. Now there were 33,000 part-time jobs created in that period for that net loss of 35,000 jobs in British Columbia.

*Government Orders*

I think we have to be very careful in how we look at those statistics. We all know that a part-time job does not replace a full-time job. It does not replace the wages of a full-time job, the salary of a full-time job, and it does not replace the benefits that are available to a full-time worker as opposed to a part-time worker. This statistic for British Columbia really tells of a very serious economic dislocation in my home province.

● (1740)

The rate of unemployment in British Columbia is increasing dramatically. It is now 6.1%. That is up from 5.3% in December and it is up very sharply over March 2008 when British Columbia had an all-time low unemployment rate of 3.8%. That is a very dramatic almost 3% increase over the past 10 months in terms of the unemployment rate in British Columbia.

British Columbian families are suffering in this economic downturn in very dramatic ways. Losing their jobs is one key way they are being affected by this economic downturn.

What is the government's response? In an economic downturn when people are losing their jobs, employment insurance is a key program to assist people at least initially with the effects of losing their jobs. Unfortunately, the government has chosen to almost completely ignore employment insurance in its budget and in the budget bill we are debating.

There is one measure. The government has decided that those people who qualify for EI will be entitled to another five weeks of benefits. That is something, I suppose, but it does not ensure that anyone who does not qualify for EI will be able to. It does not increase the rates of employment insurance that people are paid and it does not get rid of the two weeks that people have to wait through before their benefits start to flow.

The whole commitment around extending the five weeks is really a very tiny commitment. There were figures from one of the deputy ministers in the Department of Human Resources presented recently to a committee. It seems it is less than \$15 million a year in terms of increased assistance to the employment insurance program in Canada.

That is less than \$15 million a year to some of the most vulnerable people in Canada who have lost their jobs. At the same time, the government continues with its massive \$1 billion program of corporate tax cuts to the most profitable corporations in Canada. There is no excuse for not having done better to help workers who lose their jobs through difficult periods and for not having better utilized the EI program.

We know that EI has been gutted over the years. It is not the program that it once was in Canada when it offered real assistance to Canadian workers. We know that far too many people who actually pay into EI are never eligible to collect it. We know that far too many Canadians never contribute to EI, either, and are not even eligible to engage the program at any level. That needed to be addressed in the budget, especially given the economic downturn and job losses being suffered across this country.

Employment insurance stimulates the economy in the sense that when people are on EI they are not saving money. They are spending every dollar they have. That money goes back into the communities

that are affected by layoffs, and plant and mill closures. That money is important to communities, the broader community and the businesses in those communities to ensure the economic well-being of those communities. It is a crucial program and a huge opportunity has been lost. If for no other reason, the failure to address the EI program is reason enough not to support this budget and the bill before the House.

There is another problem arising out of the increased layoffs and job losses in British Columbia. The people who deliver what remains of the EI program do not have the resources to do the job properly. The processing centre located in my riding of Burnaby—Douglas was receiving 7,500 new applications for EI a week and it does not have the staff to keep up with that number of new applications.

Therefore, people are having to wait longer and the people delivering that program are working overtime. One can imagine, with that kind of workload and delivering an important program like this, the stress on those workers is very significant because they know how important it is to the people they deal with who need this program and the employment insurance income.

The government is totally unprepared to meet the challenge of even delivering the existing EI program given the changed circumstances that we have in Canada and British Columbia. Attention needs to be given to that immediately.

● (1745)

An aspect of the budget that I think is also severely lacking is the attention to the housing crisis in Canada. We know that a significant number of Canadians are homeless. We know that other Canadians are couch surfing. We know that others are underhoused and that their housing is overcrowded. We know that health conditions in a significant part of Canadian housing leave a lot to be desired.

While there are some measures in the budget, such as measures for housing for seniors, not one of these measures even comes close to being what is actually needed to address the housing crisis in Canada. Sadly, a lot of them are one-off programs. We do not yet have a long-term national housing strategy for Canada, a national housing program for Canada that commits to building homes for Canadians over a long period of time.

New Democrats have called for a 10-year national housing program that would actually build homes for Canadians. That is not delivered in the budget, and it is still an absolute requirement to help Canadians deal with the circumstances they face and are increasingly going to face because of this economic downturn.

There is no long-term national planning for housing in Canada. That is a huge failure of the government and of the budget. We need that kind of support in communities across Canada. Every weekend on street corners in greater Vancouver and around British Columbia, citizens do silent protests called Stands for Housing. Their slogan is "Homes for All". That began before the economic downturn. It was a crisis then, and those silent witness protests are continuing.

Regarding infrastructure programs, we know there is a huge limitation on what the government has proposed. A lot of it depends on matching funds from municipalities and provinces. Unfortunately, not all municipalities in Canada have the ability to match funds.

*Government Orders*

An infrastructure program in Burnaby, the Burnaby Lake dredging program, has been readied. The environmental approvals are done, the province has kicked in, the municipality has kicked in and we are still waiting for a commitment from the federal government. That one is shovel-ready, and I hope that shortly the federal government will approve funding for that important project.

I know that all political parties have called for that in the recent election. I hope the government will move on it shortly.

• (1750)

**Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Burnaby—Douglas quite closely. He was talking about the same province I am from, British Columbia.

I live in a riding that has had a lot of job loss. There is a very significant forestry community there. Our job losses do not make headlines in the same way as some of the job losses in other parts of the country. It is just a fact of life in rural British Columbia that we do not get regional or national news coverage when we lose thousands of skilled jobs.

However, I would like to talk about the fallout that occurs from that and put a different complexion on it. The reality is that the federal government has done a lot in terms of bridging to retirement programs. It is through the provincial administration, but it is federal money. We have also done a lot a lot in terms of retraining, which has gone a huge way toward addressing the concerns of people who have lost jobs that they were expecting to have for a lifetime.

I hear the member giving no credit at all to the foresight of the government in not going into a—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised. Ridings such as Vancouver Island North have had very serious economic problems with the downturn in the forest industry. The current government and the previous government have been done very little to support the forestry industry in British Columbia. We have this horrible softwood lumber agreement because we caved and did not stand up for that industry and for those workers as a government. That has led to some of the terrible problems that have faced the people of that region.

We are allowing the export of raw logs when those logs could be manufactured into a viable product here in Canada, thus keeping Canadian workers employed. There is no excuse for allowing raw log exports in a time of crisis in an industry in British Columbia.

We have seen the failure of the federal government to deliver on the pine beetle programs. There are 103 aboriginal communities in Canada that list themselves as endangered communities because they have not been able to access the money the federal government promised was there to assist communities in responding to the crisis started by the pine beetle. They have not been able to that. They have not been able to prepare for the kinds of fires that might result, or even to do the firebreak work around their communities to protect those communities, because they cannot—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway may have a short question.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about education.

In good times or bad, a country needs a strong educational system. I notice in the budget that one of the target groups the government is going after is students who have student loans. I also want to mention that an important infrastructure project in B.C. has to do with the seismic upgrading of schools, which is important to keep our children safe. Would the member for Burnaby—Douglas comment on the educational impact of the budget and what it does and does not do?

• (1755)

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that in the budget implementation act there are new provisions around the Canada student loan program that are punitive. They go after students who are in difficulty with their student loans. They require them to provide documentation to the government. It is actually a punitive measure against a very small percentage of students, those who do not make the payments on their student loans. This kind of measure has no place in the budget implement act. It is not an economic stimulus measure. It is not an economic measure. If the Conservatives were looking to recover money owed to the government, why not go after some of the business loans that are outstanding in programs in which only a very tiny percentage is ever repaid? The government should not go after students who need assistance in getting their education.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in this House. I am here today because of the citizens in my riding of Saint-Lambert and because of the trust they have put in me. They know that I will never go back on the principles and values that have always carried me through. And it is these principles and values that will keep me from voting for this budget. This budget has brutally attacked the concepts of social justice and solidarity in too many ways. This budget goes against the responsibilities I believe in and that guide my judgment, as well as those of the party I am pleased to be a part of, the Bloc Québécois.

Let us first look at what is planned for women. For the status of women, the budget continues the assault that the Conservatives began when they came to power. By making pay equity negotiable, the Conservatives have trampled a right that many, with good reason, consider to be a fundamental right, a vested right. This serves as a reminder that wilful ignorance, which they do so well, should be denounced at every opportunity, as the Bloc Québécois did when this same government announced cuts to the 2006 budget of Status of Women Canada. Do we need to be reminded that these cuts led to the closure of 12 of the 16 regional offices of Status of Women Canada, one of which was in Quebec City?

*Government Orders*

We could also mention the abolition of the court challenges program, another shameful tactic to silence citizens' claims against the government. Women's groups made extensive use of this program to assert their rights. I could also talk about this government's decision to reject the recommendations of the pay equity task force. Some years ago, it instructed the government to adopt proactive pay equity legislation, modelled after the existing Quebec law, which provides that pay equity disputes must not be settled through collective bargaining. That law is fundamentally different from the legislation proposed by the government.

No matter, I will continue to add my voice to those unconditionally defending women's rights, as long as I am able to stand, as will all Bloc Québécois members.

I cannot ignore the fact that women are most vulnerable when it comes to employment insurance benefits. In fact, only one out of three women qualifies for employment insurance benefits when she loses her job. Why? Simply because more women hold part-time or temporary jobs, work on contract or on an occasional basis, or are self-employed. In fact, approximately 40% of women hold a so-called atypical job, which considerably decreases their chances of receiving employment insurance benefits. I cannot stress enough how devastating these rules can be for certain families, especially mother-led single-parent families.

But women were not the only ones forgotten in the most recent budget. All manner of unemployed people were forgotten despite what this government may say. Adding five weeks of employment insurance benefits when more than half the unemployed do not meet the program's eligibility criteria will not make much difference for half the workers and will make no difference at all for the other half.

The Conservative government can go ahead and accuse the Bloc Québécois of not working with it, but the Bloc Québécois has long been calling for major changes to the employment insurance system, changes that would certainly have made it possible to provide unemployed men and women with substantial assistance. This morning, in fact, my colleague from Chambly—Borduas has introduced a bill in that connection. I will employ a formula much favoured by the hon. members over the way and invite them to work with us to ensure that the changes he proposes are accepted as promptly as possible. In fact, the main proposals in this bill are: reduction of the minimum qualifying period to 360 hours worked, regardless of the regional unemployment rate; increasing the weekly benefit rates from 55% to 60%; abolition of the waiting period; and making it possible for self-employed workers to belong to the program on a voluntary basis. There are other measures besides.

After helping themselves to over \$54 billion from this fund—to which the unemployed have contributed while working, week in and week out, year in and year out—the least they could do would be to make amends and restore the spirit that lay behind this program when it was created.

• (1800)

The unemployed have suffered for years from this undue hardship, and now that the number of people needing EI benefits will be greater than ever, this government does nothing to improve access to benefits—it does the opposite.

What is there in this budget to remove these inequalities, this profound injustice? Nothing, absolutely nothing. This has led many people to say that the Canadian employment insurance program has been a real joke for more than a decade, but the least funny joke imaginable. It is a very lame joke, indeed. Lame, because everybody has heard it before, and lame, because the consequences are not an imaginary situation, as they are in a really funny joke, but very real. And above all, because those consequences have been rubber stamped, endorsed, and approved by one government after another that ruled this country.

By handing out mind-boggling—not to mention permanent—tax cuts, this government is depriving itself of precious revenues, just as it did when it cut the GST by 2%. These generous donations, which do nothing to help the less well-off who, in many cases, do not pay taxes, have a minimal effect on domestic spending and on gross domestic product, as the government itself admitted in its budget. In fact, every dollar spent on employment insurance contributions returns two times more than a dollar invested in tax cuts, and every dollar invested in infrastructure returns 10 times more than a dollar invested in tax cuts. However, it seems that this government would much rather line the pockets of the rich than help those hit hardest by the economic crisis, which, let us not forget, is still in its early days.

January 2009 was the most devastating month in Canadian history in terms of job losses: 129,000 jobs were lost. If the current trend persists—and there is, unfortunately, no reason to expect it to change—nearly 70,000 of the newly unemployed will not be eligible for employment insurance. What will they do? Where will they go? Where will older workers who cannot be retrained go? The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development continues to deny reality, just as she did in the House last Friday, and insists on creating a false dichotomy between retraining workers and paying out income support benefits for older workers.

The fact that we are asking for this program—a program that worked well in the past and would cost the federal government less than \$50 million per year—does not mean that we do not want older workers who have been laid off to get back into the workforce. We are simply recognizing the harsh reality these people are facing: having to change jobs, perhaps even fields that late in life when getting back into the labour force is certainly more difficult.



*Government Orders*

In 2005, the Employment Insurance Commission reported that approximately 40% of older workers have not completed their high school education. The result is simple: according to the commission's report, when older workers lose their jobs, they are more likely to remain unemployed longer than younger workers. After spending their entire life working to give the next generation the means to succeed, and as they are approaching a new phase of life, is the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development prepared to tell them what the member for Jonquière—Alma and the Minister of National Revenue did, that they should move to Alberta where the unemployment rate is lower? Does this government not have any empathy for older workers or will it simply tell them to pack their bags and move if they want to find work?

In closing, I would simply like to say that I appreciate this government's efforts to build concrete infrastructures. However, as women's advocacy groups have said, we must not overlook social infrastructures, which are essential to human development. Their value cannot necessarily be calculated in dollars and cents, but it is nonetheless real. And because I believe such social infrastructures have been overlooked in this budget, I cannot bring myself to vote in favour of Bill C-10, Budget Implementation Act, 2009.

• (1805)

[English]

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the member. Does she not think that one of the most effective ways the government can actually help those most in need, those people who have lost their jobs, would be to modernize the EI system by ensuring that EI is equitable across Canada, that individuals receive the same benefits in the same way as others who have lost their jobs across the country and to put more money into the processing aspect right now? Many of our constituents are waiting two months or more for their cheque, which means they are losing their homes, the assets they need to live and they are becoming destitute. The loss of jobs is being compounded by the inadequate administration at the EI level.

Does my colleague not think that those would be effective solutions to deal with this problem?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin:** Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, the very thing we should be doing during an economic crisis is improving the employment insurance system. My colleague introduced a bill this morning with a view to improving this system.

Last Sunday, I took my son to his soccer game and I spoke with two parents who are seasonally employed. They explained to me that, even though they had made claims for employment insurance in December, they were still waiting to receive their benefits. They told me that this was the first time in 10 years that it has taken this long and that it made no sense.

Meanwhile, these people often use their credit cards to buy food, pay the rent and pay for the daily needs of their family, knowing that the interest rates on these cards have gone up. Imagine when these people receive their first payments—they will already be up to their ears in debt.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. Bloc Québécois member for her speech,

which brought forward many excellent reasons not to support the budget.

I would like to ask her a question. What impact would the budget—supported by the Liberals—have on Quebec women and their children?

On this side of the House, starting at the middle, we know that this budget will not support families.

Why does the budget not support them?

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. And I neglected to thank the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for his question earlier.

In my opinion, this budget is extremely disturbing, especially when it comes to the plight of families, because it includes nothing for families. It talks about renovating social housing, and I know that there is a huge need for more housing, so new social housing should be built.

I seriously wonder what sort of society the government wants. Everything is backwards. The government is abandoning workers and undermining women who have ideas and plans. The government wants to train our older workers. In fact, it wants to hold on to older workers while our young people drop out, and we are calling on the government to make transfers for post-secondary education. It is high time we pushed this issue.

At the same time, the government is not doing anything about the guaranteed income supplement for our workers, for our seniors. Everything is backwards, and I am extremely concerned by this budget. That is why I will not vote in favour.

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thériault (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Saint-Lambert on her excellent speech. She really covered the waterfront and explained why we in the Bloc Québécois will not support this budget.

Can my colleague from Saint-Lambert tell me how measures such as abolishing the waiting period would benefit people who receive employment insurance?

Why are such measures needed?

• (1810)

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that if the Conservative government wanted to rapidly take action to help workers in a quick and effective manner, it could decide right now to abolish the waiting period. That does not require a bill. They could implement an administrative measure that would take effect quickly.

If the waiting period were eliminated, employment insurance benefits would be paid on the first day of unemployment. That is very important for anyone who loses their job. That is the reason for putting this measure in place.

*Government Orders*

There is the additional five weeks of benefits. But not all workers will have access to these five weeks because they may not be available in some regions. How does that help? I repeat that we must help our workers who lose their jobs as soon as they become unemployed.

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in an interesting time, certainly in the global context, dealing with the unprecedented downturn in the global economy.

One word that has become much more common in our vocabulary, certainly in the political realm, is the word “hope”. This word was frequently used in the election campaign held by our neighbours to the south. It is a word that inspired not only millions of Americans but inspired people all around the world, as well as those here in Canada. As people face unprecedented job losses, the dangers to their savings and the threats to their well-being, they are desperately looking for hope.

Hope was something that we were all looking for in the budget. Our leader and our party talked about what we would like to see in the budget to deal with the hope Canadians were looking for.

I would like to begin my speech by speaking about Canadians in the area that I represent. We are actually feeling quite hopeless when it comes to the budget. I would like to paint a picture of some of the issues that my region is facing.

First, we are dealing with the loss of jobs in the forestry industry, following on a dynamic that crosses our country. People have lost well paying jobs, jobs that are at the root of the well-being of our communities.

While great effort was made by provincial and municipal governments, the federal government was not at the table. It was the softwood lumber deal, or the softwood sell out as we call it, that created the job losses in our area. These jobs have gone elsewhere because Canadians certainly are not benefiting from the softwood lumber sell out.

Jobs are also being lost in the mining sector. As the price of our mining resources goes down, hundreds of people in our area have either lost their jobs or are about to lose their jobs.

We also have in our area a number of first nations communities that have failed to see any kind of job creation and have certainly not benefited from any economic development on a national level. In terms of these areas, people were looking to the budget for some support.

With respect to regional development, I applaud the government for putting emphasis on southern Ontario, but it did not look at other regions. The federal government did not take a leadership role in partnering with the provincial or territorial governments in terms of truly creating broader regional development. We in northern Manitoba consider ourselves to be northern Canada. We would like to see the federal government come to the table and look at some of the economic development opportunities in our region. I can assure members of the House that there are many opportunities and some very promising ones.

Another disappointment was that the government did not address the challenges facing the mining community. While the government issued a press release in December indicating that it would be there for the forestry and mining communities, mining was almost entirely left out of the budget.

I am glad to see support for mining exploration but there is nothing in the budget to deal with the severe job losses that the mining industry is facing and there is nothing for these communities. Hundreds of jobs are being lost in our neighbouring province and many of us fear that it will continue to get worse in our region as well.

I have a great deal of concern with respect to first nations. I am glad to see a positive commitment to housing and education, but I am concerned as to how the money will become realized in terms of tangible changes in infrastructure and the quality of life for first nations. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on private housing. This is not a reality for first nations in Canada. The reality is that many first nations do not have the money to invest in private housing. In order to deal with the shameful third world conditions on many first nations, we need the government to step up and work along with band governments to ensure that first nations have adequate housing.

● (1815)

One of the biggest areas absent in the budget to deal with the challenges facing first nations is that of job creation. I think many of us recognize that job creation and economic development opportunities can help many of these communities become self-sufficient. They certainly stand to benefit from the resources in their areas and of their people, while partaking in the 21st century economy that the rest of Canada takes for granted.

This is an area where the federal government could play a much more substantial role. It would also serve to look at the future and how communities all across Canada can be part of moving ahead as the economy moves forward out of this downturn.

On EI reform, as hundreds of people lose their jobs in our area and across the country, there is a huge concern around the waiting times, with which the government has yet to be deal. The fact is many people, certainly in northern Canada, are not in positions to accumulate enough hours to access EI. There is a need to recognize that these injustices take place and are most often dealt to people who have, year after year, paid into a fund that they hope to access if they are in the unfortunate position of losing their jobs.

My hometown of Thompson, Manitoba has been calling for partnerships in housing for quite some time. We need affordable housing. We need housing for students who are attending University College of the North. We need housing for single parents who are raising their families. We need housing for professionals who are coming into our communities and participating in our industries. Those kinds of investments are not going to be a reality, given the significant lack of funding toward housing as a result of the budget.

We hope many of the commitments in infrastructure are realized in tangible projects and communities. With respect to some of the shovel ready projects, municipalities and the province will need to be at the table. In the case of some of our municipalities, they are unable to come up with some of the funds. There is also the need to look at building some projects that perhaps might be more long term than the two year parameter that has been set up.

On the more national level, and moving beyond the regional piece, there is a number of other areas where this budget poses a great deal of concern. Much has been said today about the rollback of rights, whether it is women's rights or the rights to collective bargaining. That speaks to a real failure to move away from dealing with the economic reality that people are facing. In fact, it brings Canada even further back in the quality of the tangible human rights that we all deserve to enjoy in a country such as ours.

On pay equity, much has been said about following the Manitoba model. Coming from Manitoba, it is important for me to point out that there are some significant differences in our model. Complaining to the Human Rights Commission is prevented as a result of these changes.

These are some of the areas that concern us. I will come back to the initial word that has brought us so much energy at a time of so much despair: hope. Unfortunately, it seems it has not been taken into consideration when looking at the long-term results and impacts of the budget. It seems Canada will be left a lot more hopeless than it began.

● (1820)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech with some interest. I want to point out a number of inconsistencies in her speech.

First, she said that members of her party were looking to the budget with hope. Actually, they were not looking to the budget for hope. They were voting against it before they ever saw it.

Second, she cited a number of measures in the United States. The United States is our number one trading partner. I am a member of a party that has always been supportive of a positive relationship with the United States. During my first three years in Parliament, her party spent its time bashing the United States every time it had an opportunity to so. That was not productive in our relationship.

Has the NDP looked outside of Canada's borders? Does it understand what is going on? Does it understand that places like Great Britain are having great difficulty? The United States is not the only other nation that is encountering difficulty. Canada has been insulated by the measures of this government, the proactive actions that we have taken. Does the hon. member understand that? Does she look outside of Canada's borders, or does she just look within and see nothing?

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, all members come with the sentiment of hope that all our constituents bring to us. This has been a guiding force in the work that I take on before Parliament and after Parliament.

As far as being insular, for a moment it seemed that Canada was being portrayed as insular.

### *Government Orders*

In terms of some of the measures the government has not taken, whether it is the failure to adequately invest in research and development or the failure to act in a cutting edge way when it comes to the environment, that reflects some insular modes of looking inside rather than looking at the leadership role Europe and the United States are taking in those areas.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member mentioned two things.

The first was mining, which is as important to her riding as it is to mine. Could she comment on the effect of the one year extension of the mining exploration tax credit on her riding?

The second is she mentioned hope for people around the world. I hope the people who are near death in the Congo, Darfur and Burma, as well as the Baha'is in Iran, who are being persecuted and murdered, are not forgotten.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, on the mining exploration tax credit, we think it is a great idea to support some of the initial steps in mining exploration, and I pointed that out.

I want to be clear. People in mining communities are losing their jobs in the thousands. Many of these companies provide a great deal of tax revenue to the federal government. It is because of the hard work of people in communities in our area, in Thompson, Flin Flon, Snow Lake, that the Government of Canada and that Canada in general benefit. It is a huge stimulant for northern Canada as well.

Why is the government not responding to and supporting these communities that are facing great difficulties?

On the international front, we need to look at our role, the leadership role that Canada has been very proud of for years and that it has taken across the world. We are seeing that slip. As we look forward, this is another example of how we are losing hope in our ability to participate in the respectful way. We have had a history of doing this across our borders.

● (1825)

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during the last campaign, many parents told me of their need for quality, accessible and affordable child care to assist them in meeting their work obligations and to ensure their children had access to the best education and educational starts we could give them.

One of my constituents, Sharon Gregson, is a member of the school board and runs the daycare at Collingwood Neighbourhood House—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Churchill.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP has worked hard to push for child care and to look at the well-being of all our communities. However, it is unfortunate that it has been forgotten in the budget.

Many of us will continue to fight hard for it. We work closely as colleagues. We would like to see the government recognize how important it is to the social infrastructure of our country and most definitely the future of our country as well.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I do not have much time to address the House here this evening, but I would nevertheless like to summarize what has happened over the last few weeks regarding this budget.

A few weeks ago, three opposition parties did something rather exceptional. They completely abandoned their partisan interests in order to come together and do their best to bring down this ideological and dogmatic government, and provide Quebecers and Canadians with a more interesting alternative. Unfortunately, a few days later, the Liberals pitifully caved in, putting their party's interests ahead of the interests of citizens, the interests of the people they represent. What we now have is a Conservative-Liberal coalition. This new coalition is especially shameful for the Liberals, who received nothing in exchange.

They proposed an amendment and got reports. They probably also got an end to legal action and a new coat rack in the lobby. They did not get much else. In their amendment, they asked for reports, which they said would help monitor the government. That is funny, because I always thought it was the role of the members of this Parliament, of this House, to monitor the government. If we understand the Liberal motion correctly, they are asking the government to produce reports so that they can monitor it. It is a bit ridiculous, and it does nothing for the people who really need help.

One might ask what happened to the Liberals' green shift. How could a party that supposedly campaigned on the environment support a budget that includes no environmental measures that are serious or worthy of the name? The only measure this government is trying to pass off as an environmental measure is the assistance to the oil companies for carbon storage, which is not nearly enough.

The coalition agreement drawn up by the three opposition parties talked about introducing the POWA, as it was formerly called, a program for older worker adjustment. Obviously, in the new Liberal-Conservative coalition, there is no such program. What was this program? It used to exist, but it was abolished by the Liberals and never reinstated by the Conservatives. This program enabled older workers who were victims of mass layoffs in their community to bridge the gap between the end of their employment income and the start of their retirement income. Now, people are forced to sell everything, give up all their assets and go on social assistance until their pension kicks in. I submit that this is a sad end for people who worked their whole lives to build this country, their country.

All we asked was that the government reinstate this program to enable these people, who worked hard, to live out their days in dignity. The Liberals failed miserably. They were not even able—

• (1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I must interrupt the hon. member. He will have six minutes left when debate resumes tomorrow.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[Translation]

## ARTS AND CULTURE

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on January 27, I asked a question in the House, and I did not receive a satisfactory answer from the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages. I told him that Quebec's minister of culture, communications and status of women, Christine St-Pierre, had reiterated that artists should get back the money the federal government cut last year so that they could continue to augment their international presence. She has made the request again since then. The Minister of Canadian Heritage did not really give her an answer.

I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages if he would reinstate the funding for tours abroad. This is something that artists really need. Clearly, the response was unsatisfactory. I said so earlier. This government is incapable of understanding how much the Quebec nation cares about its artists becoming well-known abroad. The Minister of Canadian Heritage should think about working harder—that is what I told him then, and I am repeating it now—to convince his colleagues to transfer all responsibility for arts and culture, along with the associated funding, to Quebec.

The January 27 budget was extremely disappointing for artists and the cultural community. Naturally, some were satisfied. Some were polite. Others were relieved that their program was not eliminated but renewed.

Even though the minister has said that he has provided an unprecedented amount of money and is patting himself on the back for it, we should look at the cold facts of this budget, which renews existing programs. For example, he says that he will inject \$200 million into a program over the next two years. This program usually received \$100 million per year. He is not making cuts but he is calling it new money.

The budget does not provide direct financial assistance to artists. The Bloc Québécois has been asking the government to increase Canada Council funding to \$300 million. Since its creation, all governments have increased its funding by dribs and drabs. This government also opened its wallet, but that was not enough. It invested \$30 million two years ago and we have been hearing about it for the past two years as though it were the end of the world. At present the Canada Council budget is \$180 million; artists need \$300 million. Thus there is no direct assistance for artists and people are hurting.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

As I only have one minute left, I will conclude my speech. In short, this government has told us that studies explain why it eliminated the seven programs in August. However, it will not show us these studies and it wants us to take its word. Everything they have said to date does not lead us to believe them. We are asking to see these studies, but more importantly, we are asking that responsibility for the arts and culture, and the associated funding, be transferred to Quebec. In Quebec, we love artists, we understand them and we will look after them.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will be very encouraged to know that we like artists and our government is very supportive of artists. In fact, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about our government's record with respect to support for arts and culture because it is a great story. It is a wonderful story. I am proud of our record. It is record investment in the arts.

Our government acknowledges how essential arts and culture is to our communities, our identity, our economy, particularly in challenging economic times. We know exactly how important a vibrant cultural sector is to Canada's economy.

Just for your own information, Mr. Speaker, and you are probably aware of this, but in 2007 arts and culture contributed \$46 billion to Canada's GDP and 660,000 jobs nation-wide. It is a big industry. It is an important industry.

In the current economic context the long-term sustainability takes on greater importance. We recognize the challenges that creators, producers and arts organizations face across Canada. That is why we made a \$30 million investment to the Canada Council for the Arts permanent several years ago. That is an additional \$30 million investment to the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Canada Council for the Arts is an arm's length organization. That is artists helping artists. That fund now sits at \$180 million, record funding for the Canada Council.

That is why in budget 2009 we have announced an investment of more than \$.5 billion, record funding for arts and culture and \$276 million. For the benefit of the Bloc member that is \$276 million of new investment in this budget in support of arts and culture.

Where are we going to invest that money? We are going to build on that recent investment in the Canada Council for the Arts. We are going to focus on ensuring that we have a solid base for arts and culture right across Canada.

Central to this is \$100 million to support festivals and cultural events, including cultural events and festivals in the province of Quebec and right across Canada because our government is a national government. We support things in the national interest. Arts and culture is in the national interest.

We have also invested \$200 million in the Canadian Television Fund, \$30 million in magazines and community newspapers, and \$28 million in new media. These are considerable amounts of investment.

I could go on and on. I am so proud of so many of the things that we did in this budget. Canada prizes is an example. Members of the opposition have questioned the Canada prizes. Let me tell the House what Canada Prizes is all about. It is about establishing a centre of excellence where the world will come and compete for these exclusive prizes here in Canada and Canadians will compete with them. We will put Canadians on an international stage where they will broadcast around the world and they will do it from Canada, establishing a cultural centre of excellence right here in Canada.

We know culture. We know the arts. We have incredibly talented people and we want the world to know it.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member for Peterborough has just said is a clear demonstration of his lack of understanding of the arts and artists. Helping festivals is not the way to provide direct help to artists. Inaugurating the Canada Prizes , about which he is bursting with such pride, will not give our artists here anything.

A study last week reported that our artists were indeed very poor. They barely manage to earn \$22,000 a year on average. The minister tells us he has injected \$25 million into a fund for artists who will come from countries the world over. What we were asking of the minister was not money for artists from abroad, but money for our artists to allow them to go abroad. Clearly, the minister understood nothing at all.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** That is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. The member wants us to send artists abroad, but I assume when they get abroad she does not want foreign governments or foreign people to spend anything on them. She does not want them to make any investment when they go abroad. She just wants them to arrive abroad and no one to care if they are there. If it is wrong for Canada to try to assist in promoting the arts broadly and also allowing a stage for Canadians, then it must clearly be wrong for those in foreign countries to support our artists when they get there. That is the Bloc mentality. That is what I am hearing from the Bloc. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Let me take this to another step. The member mentioned that Quebec would like to take control of culture because it is not happy and it wants the money reinstated. I have only been here three years, Mr. Speaker, and not as long as you, but despite all the challenges that provincial governments have, and I give them a lot of credit for the work that they do, I do not remember a provincial delegation coming to Ottawa yet and saying, "Please spend less. Please don't send us so much money". They always ask for more.

It is our responsibility to budget, to be responsible, to be accountable, and if there is—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. The hon. member for Windsor West.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

## STEEL INDUSTRY

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add to a question I had asked in the House of Commons with regard to a buy Canadian procurement policy.

What is important to recognize is that we have been suggesting that Canada investigate and bring forward a policy that complies with our international agreements and mirrors some of our partners, including the United States, which not only has a policy in place for defence procurement but has the Jones act for shipping and a buy American policy for stimulus package announcements that will be forthcoming. We are suggesting that Canada examine that and to not only open the door to potential and better trading relationships but also to support Canadian workers.

I have often used the example of the Navistar truck plant that is located in Chatham, Ontario. The government gave a \$300 million contract to Navistar and Navistar decided to invest in the Texas facility as opposed to Chatham, Ontario, which is a plant that we helped support and bring back from the brink just a few years ago. What is interesting in this development is that the government has decided to support the Texas workforce versus the Chatham workforce, especially when it comes to military vehicle procurement of which the people in the Chatham-Kent area would be very proud to be participants.

It is important to recognize the latest chapter on this. It is because of the government's decision to say no to the workers of Canada that the analysis coming in now show that around \$19 million will be paid out in employment insurance benefits. Therefore, as that facility closes and people are thrown out into the streets of Chatham and surrounding areas, it will cost around \$20 million in employment insurance benefits. Ironically, the cost to actually retool the facility is estimated at around \$800,000.

Today, at the industry committee, we had another breaking component to this story. When I asked the Minister of Industry whether the government had done any analysis of the cost of retooling, he said no. He did not know about the other departments, but his department said no, which is the responsible department at the end of the day.

How could we have a \$300 million project to produce military vehicles? The way it works in the United States is that if the Americans decide they need more of those trucks, they can actually bump the Canadians down the line. We may not even get our vehicles in the fashion that we are supposed to because under American legislation, they can bump other types of production for other countries, and that has happened in the past before.

We have a workforce that is capable, willing and wanting to do the job here but it is being shunned and, on top of that, we have a defence procurement policy that is actually putting our procurement at risk and giving us less control.

I would argue that the government should work toward a buy Canadian strategy. The discussion on the steel industry is what led the United States to the whole buy American explosion in the media. We are a net importer of steel and we had a waiver on that back in 2002 when the United States moved forward on a similar initiative.

However, instead of working out our own strategy, the government has decided to turn its back on the Canadian workforce, and I say shame to that. The people of this country can build and be part of the solution. Our partners will respect that because we will not be doing anything different from they themselves.

• (1840)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to the member for Windsor West. The issue is quite plain, fairly straightforward and basic. The issue is whether Canada will move into a protectionist mode as the NDP would like us to do, or whether Canada will accept and abide by free trade agreements we signed with countries around the world and will continue to pursue free trade and rules-based trading.

It is easy to say that we can be protectionist and somehow save jobs, but at the end of the day we are going to lose jobs through protectionism. We can take a look at what is going on the world. Today our largest trading partner and our closest neighbour passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in the American Senate, with \$838 billion committed to the economy. During this process we have been a very close ally and trading partner, but we have looked at it from Canada's perspective and we have pursued an outcome that is in Canada's favour.

We monitored the process very closely. We have been active on the file. At an early point, ministers expressed concern regarding protectionist provisions in the original house and Senate bills that would have expanded on the existing buy American requirements. Buy American requirements are exactly what the NDP is talking about for Canada, and exactly what we are asking the Americans not to do. It is exactly some of the measures and some of the improvements that we have made in this bill that will allow Canada to have rules-based trading with the United States.

Our ministers and officials at all levels engaged their U.S. counterparts. We did this politically. We did it diplomatically. We did it through our business channels and we did it through academia. We emphasized the need for a coordinated approach to stimulate the North American and global economies. We are not an island. We cannot think as if we do not ever have to trade in the world marketplace, because we do. We have to sell and we have to buy in the world marketplace.

It is particularly important to avoid protectionist measures, which could exacerbate this global crisis. Those are the very measures the member is talking about, the very measures that led to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Those are the very measures that will turn this economic crisis we are facing into a catastrophe instead of permitting us to find a way through it and a way beyond it.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We heard the member. The NDP has proposed that Canada should develop its own buy Canada provisions, but increased protectionism at this point would certainly increase the pain of the economic downturn. Allow me to quote Richard Fisher, president of the Dallas Federal Reserve. He is an American who understands the folly of following the road in the wrong direction. He said, "Let me just be blunt. Protectionism is the crack cocaine of economics. It may provide a high, it's addictive and it leads to economic death."

Let me be clear. It is critical during this economic downturn that we do not turn to protectionism, that we continue to be free traders, and that we continue to advance Canada's interests at home and around the world. If we do that, we will come out the other side of this economic downturn in good shape.

• (1845)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the member, we all know that the Great Depression was caused by deregulation, and then the Smoot-Hawley act came in later. It was after the fact. That is a protectionism element that was added after the Great Depression started, and it made it worse. It was different from today's situation. Today we have an economic stimulus package that is going forward.

What is important for people to understand as well is that nothing changes in the United States. Right now it still has the buy American act, which was established in 1939 and revised several times. It also provides percentages of procurement for state and local governments, and there are no changes to this. That is going to continue no matter what. Nothing changes.

They are going to continue to have these policies, and our having our own policy is not protectionism. It is a tool that we can have and that the United States uses to create local economies. It is also important for the environment. I believe we can move forward, and it is not protectionism.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about protectionism and the benefit of creating a local economy. The Americans created a local economy with their tax system that allowed within the income tax system people to write off investments and interest on their homes. They created that. Most Americans think it is a great deal. However, the member should take a look at what happened in the United States by creating a local economy. The housing market crashed and it led the United States into the situation it is in today, that very thing, creating a local economy that everyone else was shut out of.

Canada is not an island. Our country cannot afford to be an island. We have to look at the global marketplace. We have to make sure our doors are open and that our neighbours' doors are open. That does not mean we turn our backs on Canadian workers or Canadian business. It means that we protect our own interests while we continue to look beyond our own borders.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on January 29 the Minister of Human Resources made a comment about EI, which was quoted in the newspaper. When asked why she did not do more to stimulate the economy and to help unemployed workers, she stated, "We do not want to make it

lucrative for them to stay home and get paid for it". She used the word "lucrative".

That is taken not just by opposition members but by people across the country, particularly unemployed Canadians, as an affront to Canadian workers. It implies that workers actually want to be unemployed. It reminds people of the culture of defeat comment that the Prime Minister made about Atlantic Canada some time ago. It implies that people would rather be unemployed and receive a fraction of their salaries than to be working.

It is important to note that according to Statistics Canada the average unemployed worker who is receiving benefits, and we have to understand that is a lot lower percentage of the workforce than it used to be, makes \$331 a week. That amount is so far from being lucrative that one cannot even see lucrative from that place.

In advance of the budget, there was much discussion about what could be done to improve EI. It seemed as though everybody was saying that something had to be done about EI. We have to stimulate the economy and there is no better way than employment insurance because those who receive it have to spend it. They have no choice; they have nothing else.

We could eliminate or reduce the two-week waiting period. We could increase the rate of benefit, which is now 55%. We could go to the best 12 weeks. We could standardize EI across the country so that everybody has access to EI having worked for the same number of qualifying hours. That is an idea as well. The government could perhaps do something for the people who are waiting to receive their benefits.

I am getting calls as is probably every member of Parliament from people saying that it is taking too long. The standard is supposed to be 28 days to process EI. There are people in my constituency who are waiting 40 to 45 days.

Now the economy is tanking and there is talk of stimulus. A study was done for the U.S. Senate banking committee just two weeks ago about what would be the best stimulative impact for the economy. One could look at infrastructure, tax cuts and employment insurance. The best is employment insurance because every \$1 put in actually generates \$1.61 for the economy.

After the budget came out, Finn Poschmann of the C.D. Howe Institute, said:

It's surprising, given how much money is being spent on initiatives of one kind or another that the government couldn't find ways to ease access for laid off workers....

Armine Yalnizyan of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives stated:

Six out of 10 Canadians don't get EI and everyone agrees that's a problem, but this government inexplicably decided to ignore the problem - and that will lead to disaster for many.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Let me say to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, whom I respect and I look forward to working with him on committee, that this is like a bad movie for Canadian workers. Does he agree with the minister's comments that we are anywhere close to making employment insurance too lucrative for Canadian workers?

• (1850)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his comments and views with respect to improvements to the employment insurance program, and certainly I look forward to working with him as well.

I am pleased to address our government's actions to improve the employment insurance program to help Canadians through these uncertain economic times. As the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development said at committee today, our government knows that many people are worried about making ends meet. Many are worried and concerned about keeping their jobs, about being able to pay their mortgages, worried and concerned about being able to take care of their families. We understand that and we empathize with them as a government.

It is during these difficult times that Canadians need to know that their government is listening to them and that we have an action plan that will help them. As the minister said, through our economic action plan, we will help those facing unemployment. We will protect jobs. We will invest in training and skills development. To help cushion the impact of these difficult economic times, our government is delivering significant improvements to employment insurance that focus on where the need is greatest right now.

We are expanding the duration of EI benefits to support those facing challenges in looking for work so that people can get back to work to provide for their families. For the next two years, we are making available nationally the five weeks of extended EI benefits that have previously been available through a pilot project only in regions with the highest unemployment. We will increase the maximum duration of EI benefits to 50 weeks.

This measure is on top of the automatic adjustments in the employment insurance program that respond quickly to changes or a swing in economic conditions in each region. As unemployment rates rise, fewer hours are needed to qualify for EI benefits and additional weeks of benefits will become available to those who need them. Many regions have already seen their entrance requirements decrease and their benefit durations increase.

That is exactly the way it should be. If the unemployment rate rises, additional benefits of EI will become available with fewer hours needed to qualify. That is the flexibility built into the EI system and it is working for Canadians.

We have also frozen EI rates because to let those rates increase is to raise job-killing taxes on businesses. That would not be appropriate. We are ensuring these businesses are not burdened any further in this tough economic environment. This will protect jobs.

We are also extending work sharing agreements and increasing their accessibility. The result will be that more Canadians continue to work while companies experience temporary slowdowns before recovering.

We are looking into the future as well to ensure our economy can create jobs of the future while protecting the jobs of today. Helping Canadians receive training is essential to helping them get back into the work force. That is why our measures for training older and long-tenured workers are very important. For tens of thousands of these workers, we will extend support for the duration of their retraining and make sure they are not penalized for using severance to pay for it.

Again, as the minister said, we understand and sympathize with those who are going through difficult times. That is a fact. Following the most extensive prebudget consultations our country has ever seen, we have heard from them and we are delivering to Canadians through our economic action plan. The plan will stimulate the economy. It will help to create and maintain jobs.

As parliamentarians, we owe it to Canadians to pass the legislation as soon as possible. I would ask the hon. member to vote for the passage of the implementation of the measures set out in the budget.

• (1855)

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague but the point here is that we could extend benefits for five weeks, but if people do not qualify for benefits it does no good. It is like saying we are going to have income tax deductions, but one's last name has to begin with P to get it. It does not apply to most Canadians. It does not make enough of a difference.

In the United States in fact, the United States Congress has already passed two extensions to employment benefits, and a new bill could see American workers who are laid off collect benefits for up to two years. When the C.D. Howe Institute says to the government that it has not gone far enough, surely the government needs to pay attention to that.

I know my colleague has the speaking notes from the department and he read them very well. He has a wonderful voice. I want to ask him this. From his heart, does he believe the minister was right to say that EI could get too lucrative?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, as a government we understand the challenges and the fears of many Canadians who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own. We as a government will be there to help them get through this tough economic time. We have an economic action plan that will help the unemployed and help them get back into the workforce so they can provide for their families.

We understand what they are going through. We empathize with them and we are working with them. We are acting to protect jobs. We are acting to create jobs. We are acting to protect and help the most vulnerable get back on their feet.



*Adjournment Proceedings*

Everyone is concerned about what is happening. Everyone knows about the challenges people are facing. This is not a time to play politics, but to get together to help those who need it most. I would ask the member to get behind the budget implementation bill. Let us get it passed as soon as we can to ensure that help is there when our workers need it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** 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 6:59 p.m.)

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**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

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