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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 12, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 12, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to table the report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons, entitled “Managing Identity Information”.

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I also have the honour to lay upon the table the special report of the Privacy Commissioner concerning the examination of the privacy management frameworks of selected federal institutions.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 2008-09

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting supplementary estimates (C) for the financial year ending March 31, 2009, was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two reports this morning.

I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in relation to Access to Information Act reform.

The committee has recommended to the government that a bill to update the Access the Information Act be presented to Parliament by May 31.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, in relation to supplementary estimates (B), 2008-09, which we report without amendment.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-315, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (leaving province to avoid warrant of arrest or committal).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to reintroduce this bill that addresses a glaring loophole in our criminal justice system. There is a serious problem in Canada with regional arrest warrants that are issued across the country but are not executed because of the cost of returning the accused to the area of the alleged crime.

This is of particular concern in British Columbia. A 2005 study by the Vancouver Police Department found that over a three month period, it came into contact with 726 people, subject to 1,582 of these kinds of warrants. Eighty-four per cent of these people had four or more criminal convictions, including sexual assault and other serious crimes. This has seriously eroded public confidence in the criminal justice system in the lower mainland of Vancouver.

My bill would make it an indictable offence for a person to leave the province of jurisdiction where he or she knows or has reason to believe that a warrant for his or her arrest has been or will be issued.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has called for this kind of action, a call that has been supported by provincial justice ministers right across Canada. The chiefs of police in my community of New Westminster and of Port Moody support it but so far it has been totally ignored by the federal government.

Routine Proceedings

I urge the government and my colleagues in this House to help me get this important legislation through the House of Commons and right what is a very serious wrong.

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

* * *

•(1005)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-316, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (special benefits).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I originally introduced this bill in the previous Parliament when the issue of sickness benefits on the employment insurance benefit program was brought to my attention by a constituent whose name is Natalie Thomas.

Natalie was recovering from breast cancer surgery and was forced to return to work before she had fully recovered because her EI sickness benefits ran out. People who have suffered a serious illness should not be forced to go back to work too early. They should be able to focus on getting well and not have their health compromised by worries over their financial situation.

That is why I am pleased to reintroduce the bill to extend sickness benefits under EI from 15 weeks to 30 weeks.

Natalie Thomas is the kind of woman who all Canadians can respect. Since she had her diagnosis, she has participated in fundraising activities for breast cancer research for support for other people going through cancer. She is a role model for all Canadians.

As my colleagues in the NDP have raised repeatedly, there are many problems with the current EI system but I seek the support of all members of the House for this bill, which would resolve one of them.

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

* * *

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-317, An Act to amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act (Northern Ontario).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce this bill which was previously introduced by the former member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking. I am confident that it has the support of both the Liberals and the New Democrats. All we need is the support of the government party to make this happen.

The government has moved forward to increase the number of seats in Ontario, as it has committed and promised to do. I think I speak on behalf of all of the members from northern Ontario, many of them here this morning, such as the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, who seconded the bill, as well as the members for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Sudbury and Nickel Belt. This is a very important piece of work and an important message to be sent to the commission that will look at how these new ridings will be developed.

We need to ensure that northern Ontario loses no further its voice in this place. It is really important, given the large geography of northern Ontario and the large population there, made up of many aboriginal communities, that we not lose our voice in this place.

Over the last 10 years we have gone from having 15 seats in the House of Commons to having 9, which is a shame. It really reduces our ability to have an effect in this place and to get the kinds of things we need from government to protect that really important segment of the economy that has served this country so well.

It is my pleasure and privilege this morning to introduce the bill and to ask the members of the House of Commons to move expeditiously to support it and ensure it becomes the order of the day.

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

* * *

•(1010)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-318, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (self-employed artists and authors).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is another bill whose time has passed and should be in place.

The purpose of the enactment would be to allow self-employed artists and authors to participate in the employment insurance scheme and obtain such advantages as maternity, parental and sickness benefits and access to publicly funded training programs.

This is a group of people who typically earn very little wages and are unemployed, not just periodically, but often in any given year and when they are not employed they need access to training, re-training and upgrading. They also need to look after themselves and their families when they get sick.

Without the artists and authors, how would we capture the story that is Canada, those wonderful pictures, both in books and on canvas that these people put before us that we come to appreciate and which serve us so well.

I think it is time that we as a government moved to protect the well-being, the income and the families of these very important professionals in every one of our communities.

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

* * *

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-319, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act (speed limiters).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to re-introduce this legislation and I thank my colleague for Pickering—Scarborough East for seconding the bill.

Each summer we witness carnage on our highways caused by excessive speed. Since first introducing this legislation in the previous Parliament, I have received support from municipalities and police forces from across the country.

This legislation would help save lives by requiring all vehicles manufactured after January 1, 2010, to be equipped with speed limiters so that vehicles cannot travel at more than 150 kilometres per hour.

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

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS

INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I once again have the privilege of presenting a petition signed by many citizens from the National Capital Region concerning heavy-truck traffic in the downtown core of the nation's capital. These petitioners are worried that building another bridge would not actually resolve the issue.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to force the National Capital Commission to conduct an in-depth study regarding a possible bridge linking the Canotek industrial park and the Gatineau Airport, namely, a variation on option number 7 of the first phase of the environmental assessment of the interprovincial crossings. Both the Ontario and Quebec governments support this idea.

[English]

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the clerk of petitions, I have two petitions to table. The first petition concerns the dangers associated with the misuse of alcohol.

The petitioners from my riding of Mississauga South would like to bring to the attention of the House that the Food and Drugs Act is designed to protect Canadians from potentially harmful effects related to food and drug consumption and that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may cause health problems. Further, that fetal alcohol syndrome and other alcohol-related birth defects are preventable by avoiding the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy and that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may also impair one's ability to operate machinery and automobiles travelling maybe as much as 150 kilometres an hour.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to require the labelling of alcoholic beverages to caution expectant mothers and others of the risks associated with alcohol consumption.

●(1015)

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with legislation that I have raised in this place on a number of occasions concerning public safety officers, particularly police officers and firefighters.

Speaker's Ruling

This petition draws to the attention of the House that police officers and firefighters are required to place their lives at risk in the execution of their duties on a daily basis. It also states that the employment benefits of these public safety officers often provide insufficient compensation to the families of those who are killed while on duty and further, that the public mourns the loss of police officers, firefighters and other public safety officers who lose their lives in the line of duty, and that they wish to support, in a tangible way, the surviving families in their time of need.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to establish a fund known as the public safety officers compensation fund for the benefit of families of public safety officers who are killed in the line of duty.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISUSE OF INTRAPARLIAMENTARY INTERNET—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine on Wednesday, February 4, concerning the alleged misuse of parliamentary equipment and services by the hon. member for Ahuntsic.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Notre-Dame-De-Grâce—Lachine for raising this important matter, the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord and the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice for their contributions and the hon. member for Ahuntsic for her statement.

[English]

In raising this question of privilege, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine explained that on Monday, February 1, she had received on her House of Commons BlackBerry an email from the member for Ahuntsic, which appeared to have been sent to all members of the House.

According to the hon. member, the email “contained text and images supporting and glorifying three organizations that the federal government has deemed to be terrorist organizations”. In fact, she characterized some of these as constituting anti-Semitic propaganda.

The member argued that the dissemination of this email was a clear misuse of parliamentary equipment and services. Noting that the hon. member for Ahuntsic had indicated that she had not viewed all the images, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine argued that it is the duty of every member to ensure that they do not intentionally or unintentionally expose members of the House to this kind of material.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The hon. member for Notre-Dame-De-Grâce—Lachine went on to say that the misuse of parliamentary services in this manner constituted a violation of her privileges as a member of Parliament. In making her arguments, she drew to the Chair's attention a ruling given on what she believed was a related question of privilege raised by the former member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, Mr. Pankiw, on February 12, 2003 in the *House of Commons Debates*, pages 3470 and 3471.

For the information of the House, I should say that that ruling concerned a mass email survey originating in the member's office that had been blocked by various government departments because it disrupted their systems.

I have carefully reviewed the interventions made by all hon. members in this case and it seems to me that the crux of the issue here is whether the actions of the hon. member for Ahuntsic in any way impeded the hon. member for Notre-Dame-De-Grâce—Lachine in the fulfillment of her duties as a member of this House.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, at page 52, reminds us that "individual Members cannot claim privilege or immunity on matters that are unrelated to their functions in the House." Thus, unless it can be demonstrated that the actions complained of were closely linked to a parliamentary proceeding, the Chair cannot intervene.

• (1020)

[English]

Having reviewed the ruling invoked by the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine in support of her argument, I have concluded that the ruling focused on the right of the member to seek information in the context of parliamentary proceedings, but I have not found in it the procedural grounds for a finding of prima facie privilege in the case now before us. I did, however, find that at that time I had enjoined all members to heed the guidelines regulating the use of their email accounts.

[Translation]

These guidelines, which I have again consulted, state categorically that members "are responsible for the content of any electronic messages sent using their account", and that account holders "will not use their network accounts for accessing data or participating in activities which could be classified as obscene, harassing, racist, malicious, fraudulent or libellous".

[English]

As I noted in a ruling involving the Internet given on June 8, 2005, at page 6828 of the *Debates*, the use of new communication technologies has ramifications that affect members in the performance of their duties. One important consideration members must take into account is that communications via the Internet and email may not be protected by privilege and may expose members to the possibility of legal action for material they disseminate.

It is not, however, the role of the Chair to monitor the contents of emails and other electronic communications that members send and receive, nor is it possible or desirable to do so. That responsibility falls to members themselves.

[Translation]

In rising to address the House on February 5, 2009, the hon. member for Ahuntsic acknowledged that she should have viewed all of the material in the links included in her email before sending it. Having now done so, she admitted that she found the material to be hateful propaganda and condemned it, and she apologized to the House and to all members for having sent the email in the first place. The hon. member for Ahuntsic then stated that she would be more vigilant in future and assured the House that such a lapse on her part would not happen again.

[English]

Having reviewed the facts of this case, the Chair cannot find that the privileges of the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine have in any way been violated by this unfortunate incident, although there is no doubt that she and other members were offended by the material they received.

In addition, by the admission of the hon. member for Ahuntsic, the House of Commons guidelines on the appropriate use of email were not respected in this case. However, in view of the unequivocal apology by the hon. member for Ahuntsic, the Chair believes the matter is now resolved and will consider the matter closed.

I thank the House for its attention to this matter.

* * *

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B), 2008-09

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, February 11, 2009, the House will, later today, proceed to study and adopt the motion regarding the Supplementary Estimates (B) and pass the supply bill through all stages.

In view of recent practices, do the hon. members agree that the bill be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The bill is now available for all hon. members.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

The House resumed from February 11 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: When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River had the floor. I believe there are eight minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks. The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

Government Orders

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise again in the House to talk about this bill and to voice my displeasure at many of the elements that are in the bill.

The Conservatives have attached a number of ideological riders to this budget implementation act. They are trying to sneak in through the back door a series of ideologically driven measures that really have nothing to do with the stimulus package. The Liberals have given a blank cheque to the government, a blank cheque which the Canadian public did not give them in October.

Hidden in the 500-plus pages of the budget implementation act, the government proposes: taking a woman's right to pay equity out of the Human Rights Act; opening up Canadian industry to more foreign ownership and hollowing out, including putting institutions like Air Canada up for sale; making it easier to punitively go after student loan recipients. Most important, the budget fails to protect the vulnerable, safeguard the jobs of today and create the green jobs that we need tomorrow.

In January all the NDP members spent a lot of time in their constituencies holding town hall meetings to talk about the things we needed to see in the budget. Probably every member in this House, regardless of which party the members belong to, did exactly the same.

I held seven town halls in seven different communities. Two things became very apparent in those town halls. The first was a need for EI reform, which of course is not in this budget, and we are very disappointed in that.

Remember that many of these communities are quite small. The other thing that came through loud and clear from the people who live in these communities is a need for small infrastructure projects that can be taken care of quickly and particularly in the non-profit sector. I have some good examples.

I held a town hall at the Royal Canadian Legion in Kakabeka Falls, the Niagara of the north, by the way, for those members who do not know about Kakabeka Falls. Twenty-five or so citizens from that very small town were there. They mentioned some things that do not require a lot of money but they cannot come up with the money themselves. For example, the Kakabeka legion needs to renovate its washrooms to make them accessible; fair enough, but they do not have the money to do that. The Rural 60 Plus centre in Kakabeka Falls needs an addition to accommodate the rise in members. A few years ago there were 60 to 70 members in the Rural 60 Plus club, and now there are almost 300 members. More space is needed, but the centre cannot raise that kind of money.

I am sure that what we found in all of the seven town halls is what all members who also have small rural towns in their constituencies found. Organizations like the Kakabeka Falls Legion and the Rural 60 Plus club provide a very important function not just for seniors but for families and children to access community discussions and get-togethers. We were very disappointed that there is nothing in the budget for those places.

The other thing that is missing is an understanding that certain cultural and heritage institutions right across the country, including in my riding, need help. The Fort Frances Museum is trying to

improve the heritage situation. There are lots of spinoffs from those sorts of things, most notably being right on an international border, the opportunity for increased tourism. We were very disappointed to see that those sorts of things were not talked about.

● (1025)

Let me mention one last non-profit organization, the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra. Members may not know that the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra is the only professional full-time orchestra between Toronto and Winnipeg. It provides a very important function to northwestern Ontario and, in particular, the citizens of Thunder Bay. Members of the orchestra work very hard all year round, not just with their symphony series but also in terms of education work and the travelling they do right across the region.

I will give the House a good example. In Atikokan on Saturday night the Thunder Bay Symphony, with Rodney Brown and *The Big Lonely*, provided a virtually free concert for the citizens of Atikokan, a community that has been very hard hit by the forestry crisis that we are in the middle of right now. I was disappointed not to see these sorts of things in the budget.

Amendments are proposed to the Navigable Waters Protection Act to streamline approval processes and give more authority to the minister to allow construction without further environmental assessments. It would exclude certain classes of works and works on certain classes of navigable waters from the approval process. While it is vague in nature, I am particularly concerned for my riding, which has been part of a historical trade route for hundreds of years, that some access would be denied.

This new act would end legal challenges to pay equity, including amending the Human Rights Act. Complaints about pay equity would no longer go through the Human Rights Commission but through the Public Service Labour Relations Board. Having a bargaining agent working on one's behalf could result in a \$50,000 fine.

It would also amend the Investment Canada Act so that only significant investments will be reviewed. That creates more than a little discomfort for this particular member.

Canada student loans is another issue in the budget and is quite punitive for students right across Canada. The act would require that anyone who receives Canada student loans must provide any document the minister requests and creates a host of new penalties for false statements or omissions. It also appears to permit the minister to retroactively punish students for making a false statement or some sort of omission on their applications for Canada student loans.

I have three children in university right now and a fourth will be attending the University of Ottawa in September. I would like to tell the House that post-secondary students right across this country are the brightest and best that this country has to offer. To include something in an act that is punitive or at the outset treats students as if they are criminals before anything happens is deplorable.

Government Orders

In addition, I came across a figure the other day in terms of Canada student loan defaults—

• (1030)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will have to stop the hon. member there. The time has expired for his speech.

We will move on to questions and comments with the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the member's speech he mentioned navigable waters, and rightly so. As we know, the current Navigable Waters Protection Act is over 100 years old and has not been substantially revised for many years. Many people across Canada, including municipalities, have seen this act as being an impediment to getting infrastructure built. It has resulted in significant delays in projects where there is a duplication of environmental reviews.

I was a member of the transportation committee that actually did a review of the Navigable Waters Protection Act and some of the issues related to it. Since the member raised the issue and also expressed some concern that some modes of access would be blocked as a result of changes to the act, I would ask him to expand on that and explain how the act presently supports his position? How would changes to bring it up to date after 100 years would fly in the face of our efforts to get infrastructure projects built in this country that are so desperately needed to make sure that our economy gets the boost it needs right now?

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, indeed, this act is one of the oldest pieces of legislation we have in this country. It was 1882, I believe, when this act was first enacted. There is no doubt that this act needs some modernization. I would agree with the member in that regard.

What I am concerned about is that it would give increased powers to the minister to go around the environmental assessment of certain projects. Now I also know that the minister has always had that authority but it is not a new authority. However, this would increase what he is able to do.

As far as infrastructure projects go, I do not think it is in the best interests of Canadians, in any situation, to see environmental assessments put aside so infrastructure projects can go further. This stimulus package should be for projects that are ready to go right now. The projects that need an environmental assessment should indeed have an environmental assessment.

• (1035)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is important. In fact, Infrastructure Canada's departmental performance report for 2007-08 reports that no money flowed with regard to the building Canada fund and only 4% of new funding pledged by the Conservative government's initiatives in its 2007 budget were dispersed to Canadians. The \$137 million for the gateways and border crossing fund did not flow and the \$325 million for jurisdiction funding was left untouched. As well, with regard to the P3 projects, \$82 million was left unspent. The bottom line is that nearly half of the \$3.62 billion originally planned for infrastructure projects was not spent.

It appears to me, and to all Canadians, that the government does not get it about the importance of infrastructure to all Canadians, to the stimulus needed. If it had acted on that, the situation we are in right now, facing this financial crisis, would not have been as difficult to deal with. I wonder if the member would care to comment on the F grade that the Conservatives were just awarded for their lack of infrastructure spending.

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, I see that the Liberals continue to rage against the machine, but then ask for reports. It is unfortunate that they are supporting the budget, be that as it may.

Call me a cynic, but with infrastructure projects not flowing in the past two years, and not likely to flow at any great pace because of the way things are set up with communities and provinces having to put in their shares, things will be held up for a long period of time, and I think that is most unfortunate.

Maybe I am a cynic, but it seems to me that if there is a \$34 billion deficit projected for the year, then when it comes around to the next budget cycle the government is able to stand and say, "Gee, look at this. We actually are not \$34 billion in deficit; we're only \$14 in deficit". That may be the plan. Perhaps the money does not flow and the government ends up looking good in the eyes of the public, or at least it thinks it looks look good in the eyes of the public.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it just occurred to me listening to the previous remarks that God forbid we would have a surplus on March 31, what would Canadians think? With the extreme needs for stimulus spending in our economy and suddenly on March 31 we have a surplus, what will they think of the government then? I will just leave that unanswered.

In any event we are discussing Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, and I wanted to direct the attention of the House to one particular aspect of it.

I will be supporting the bill, not because it is perfect but because it is part of the government's stimulus package. If there is one reason why the government is still the government in Canada, it is because Canadians want and anticipate a stimulus package to deal with the real problems in the economy, not just here but around the world.

If we look at the bill, we will see that it has a huge menu. It looks awfully like an omnibus bill as opposed to a stimulus package bill. I think the bill has about 15 parts. One part deals with the actual bulked up spending and there is about \$6 billion outlined there. Therefore, in order to get this stimulus package out, my party is going to support the bill, warts and all, if I can describe it that way.

In this long menu, as has already been pointed out, there are a number of legislative provisions that do not appear to have very much to do with stimulus at all. I will just pick two: one is the Navigable Waters Protection Act and the other is the Competition Act. It is not immediately clear to many people, including members of the House, why these enactments have to be in this bill.

Government Orders

These are complicated pieces of legislation on their own and attempting to update them and modernize them in the context of a stimulus package bill would probably be seen as perverse by some and stupid by others. In any event, the government is either piggy-backing policy changes in this stimulus package or it is doing legislative smuggling by pushing through bills in the back of the ambulance.

I will use the ambulance analogy again if I may because this stimulus package bill is actually like an ambulance. I just hope the government is not trying to smuggle things, contraband and other pieces of legislation in the ambulance. I suggest that it may be doing that and there are many policy reasons why it should not.

I want to point out two areas but they have the very same theme. As the House knows this Parliament requires that delegated legislation, regulations passed under our existing laws, be reviewed by our Parliament, and that is done by a particular committee. What the committee reviews is all regulations and statutory instruments passed under the provisions of a law.

In these two laws, the Competition Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act, there is an apparent exemption from the Statutory Instruments Act of the regulations passed under the provisions of a law. I just want to point out one. There are several of these in this bill and there has been no rationale shown or described by the government for exempting this regulation-making from the Statutory Instruments Act. I point out clause 326 of the bill referring to section 11.1 of the Navigable Waters Protection Act that states that the minister may amend an approval of a work and that he may pass an order or a regulation in relation to that. There is another section, section 13.2 that states in one of those orders that a regulation made in relation to a class of objects like bridges and construction is not a statutory instrument within the meaning of the Statutory Instruments Act.

• (1040)

This would mean that not only does the government avoid the regulatory process in making the enactment, which would mean pre-publication and pre-consultation, et cetera and which does involve a lot of time, there are policy reasons why the government might legitimately want to avoid that pre-enactment phase of consultation and publication. However, it also, because of the wording here, would preclude Parliament from reviewing the enactment to ensure that it was legal, made within the terms of the statute, complied with the charter, et cetera.

That is something the House should never accept. We should not pass legislation that exempts regulations from parliamentary review after it is made.

Recognizing there may well be circumstances where the full regulatory process should be pre-empted, such as in cases of an emergency where a bridge is under construction or a type of bridge is under construction and the minister feels the need to intervene and halt construction, we would not want to have to wait six months to do that.

Nevertheless, the exempting provision of the bill should be amended to say that it is exempt from the Statutory Instruments Act, except for the purposes of sections 19 and 19.1. Those are the

sections under which Parliament reviews all regulations. Reviewing the regulation or the order after it is made would not interfere with the ability of the government to make the order or affect its validity, but it would ensure that there would be a review, that there would be a legality and that Parliament's function of reviewing these things would be pretty much comprehensive.

With respect to this legislation, and there are half a dozen cases in the bill, we would not also like the Department of Justice to get into the habit of inserting these exemptions all the time. In fact, it does not insert them all the time, but when it does insert an exemption from the process, there should be a rationale that is clear on the face of it.

In this case, I do not see the rationale and I am hopeful there will be an amendment made to the bill that will retain the parliamentary scrutiny of such regulations made under the statute.

• (1045)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's intervention. He has been a long-time chair of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, a joint Commons-Senate committee. I have also been a member, and this is an important aspect. Maybe the member might care to comment on it?

The budget implementation bill, which is to give the enabling of policy statements made in the budget speech, does not include the legislative amendments necessary for four areas, two of which I think are very important. One is the home renovation initiative under the policy, the \$1,350 tax credit, as well as WITB, the working income tax benefit. I understand it is the intention of the government, at a future date, to come up with another budget implementation bill to enact these further provisions.

The member has made the point that in the current budget implementation bill, there appears to be this piggybacking, or we are putting in matters which are not specifically referenced in the budget speech, but are there somehow to simply back-door some legislation.

It is not rocket science to get the provisions for the home renovation tax credit or for the amendments to the WITB program. It seems to me that this will provide yet another opportunity for the government to put in even additional legislative amendments or changes, which were not specifically referred to in the budget but which the government contends is appropriate to put here.

It is a dangerous precedent that a budget implementation bill be used to do anything more than what has been presented as policy in the budget speech. Would the member care to comment on that?

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I made the point that we did not want to stand in the way of the ambulance as we tried to get stimulus spending commenced. The hon. member has not referred to anything involving legislative smuggling or piggybacking, but he has focused on what appears to be omissions from the stimulus package, things that should be in the ambulance but are not. It is curious why things that were highlighted in the budget speech by the minister would not have been in the bill.

Government Orders

I suppose it is quite possible at some point, as all these initiatives were being developed, that somebody said that if it were not ready by 10 o'clock on a specific date in January, it would not go in the first bill. However, these items were prominently mentioned in the speech. I rather think that if I were a minister, if my friend from Mississauga South were a minister, we would have said that this stuff would be ready, that this was emergency legislation, that it would be ready by 10 o'clock and that it would be in the bill.

This is an omission. I do not think it has been adequately explained why it is not there. I understand the concept of another bill coming later, *mañana*, but Canadians are waiting for a response. The member makes an excellent point.

• (1050)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member from the Liberal Party.

The Liberals are supporting the neo-conservative party on this bill. They keep telling us they are going to demand reports from the Conservatives if they are not happy with what is going on the House. It reminds me of the comic strip *Hagar the Horrible* when he charges the castle and he looks behind him and his men are running the other way.

Could the hon. member tell me how he expects to defeat the government? Is it not a bit arrogant on the Liberals' part to think the other opposition parties will support them in this attempt to charge the gates?

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, the rationale for supporting the bill has been there. It is not a perfect bill, and probably members on the government side would agree. In fact, I have heard it said that the government does not look very neo-conservative with all the billions of dollars of deficit spending coming down the pipeline. In the end, I do not think Canadians would really forgive us if we did not get these measures passed quickly because of the stimulus contained in them.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to voice the serious concerns that the residents of Sudbury have with Bill C-10.

As I rise to speak to the bill, for some reason I have the strangest sense of déjà vu, like I have seen and heard this all before. These issues I rise to address now are the very same issues that the entire opposition rose to speak up against only a few short months ago in reaction to the November economic statement.

The opposition's unified stance forced the Conservative government to act and retract its outdated and out of touch analysis of the economic downturn. The opposition spoke with a united voice against the Conservatives attack, against women and pay equity and negotiated collective agreements and their flawed approach to getting Canada out of this economic recession.

The opposition's unified actions backed the Prime Minister into a corner, forcing him to act. Though instead of action in the best interests of Canadians, he acted in his own best interests and those actions closed down the nation's government when its people needed it the most.

There is only one real difference between last November and today. The difference is not with the Conservatives. They have

continued their partisan-driven policies. The Conservatives are still up to their old tactics as the implementation bill shows. The most unpalatable of the economic statement's measures have reappeared, though buried in the Conservatives Bill C-10

In the budget implementation bill the Conservatives have included a number of ideological riders, all in an attempt to sneak through a series of harmful, ideologically-driven measures that have nothing to do with the proposed stimulus package.

The real difference today is that the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberals will not oppose the Conservatives and this harmful implementation bill. Tonight will mark the 50th time that they will support the Conservatives. The Liberals will be supporting the very same issues they decried back in December. The issues are under a different name now, Bill C-10.

Just as I did in November, I will be voting against the implementation of these harmful measures. I will justify my reasoning for each measure in my address this morning.

The first and a concerning part of Bill C-10, given the most recent series of events in my riding, is the proposed amendments to the Investment Canada Act regarding foreign ownership. Included in Bill C-10 are amendments that would weaken controls on foreign ownership, making our accountability to Canadians all the more problematic.

This week has shown my riding first-hand the dangers of lackadaisical regulations on foreign companies.

When Xstrata announced it would be laying off nearly 700 workers in my home riding of Sudbury, it was a huge blow to the community. Sudbury is a sizeable city, but these layoffs touch everyone. Each of the 686 people laid off was someone's parent, a friend, a co-worker. What is worse, these layoffs are in violation of an agreement made with Industry Canada back in 2006.

The Xstrata layoffs are a tragic example of the importance of tighter controls on foreign ownership, not looser ones as the Conservatives have proposed.

My constituents will be glad to know that their representative will not vote in favour of measures that will make the events of this week a more frequent occurrence. They will not, however, be pleased when these measures are implemented due to the inaction on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, who will, along with his party, be supporting these measures.

Another huge issue for my riding, especially as it suffers more job losses, is employment insurance.

The budget implementation bill would end pilot project number 10 under EI, which was aimed at assessing the costs and impact of extending the number of weeks of benefits in selected economic regions. The cut is salt in the wounds of those recently laid off at Xstrata and elsewhere in northern Ontario and right across the country.

Government Orders

•(1055)

When they need their government most, when employment insurance is needed to get families through these hard economic times, the government has given them an opportunity to build a deck.

This is not the kind of action Canadians need in times like these. The government should be improving access to EI and reforming the system so that more than 50% of those who need it can qualify. It is unfortunate that some opposition parties have lost the backbone to stand up to these harmful measures and deliver the EI reforms so desperately needed for their constituents and for all Canadians.

Another hugely detrimental issue in my riding is the proposed changes to the Canada student loans programs. In Bill C-10, the program is amended to require anyone who receives a Canada student loan to provide any documents the minister requests. This creates a host of new penalties for omissions. It also seems to allow the minister to retroactively punish students for making a false statement or omission in an application for a student loan.

I should not need to remind anyone about the already burdensome and punitive process that students in my riding go through to access this program. Students at Sudbury's local universities and colleges, such as Laurentian, Cambrian and Collège Boréal, are already deeply burdened by student debt. Given the increasingly difficult reality students are facing with escalating tuition costs and the lack of affordable student housing, the government should not be positioning itself to make student life harder.

The government, faced with these challenging times, should be investing in its future and ensuring that students have access to high-quality, affordable post-secondary education. Canada will recover from this economic crisis and it will need a skilled and educated generation to move our country forward.

Though I could tell my students that the opposition parties wholeheartedly oppose these changes to the program, I wish I could tell them that all parties will be voting against this measure. Unfortunately for them and the rest of the debt-burdened student population, the Liberals will be supporting these punitive measures.

Another hugely and increasingly important focus, as we learn more about our effect on this planet, is the environment. Unfortunately, measures in Bill C-10 will move our nation backward in terms of environmental assessments.

Recently Sudbury was featured on George Stroumboulopoulos's program in relation to the "One Million Acts of Green" initiative. In the program a Sudbury woman described how she came to live in Sudbury. To the shock of some, she and her family had moved to the riding for her daughter, who suffered from asthma. The feature documents the huge steps Sudbury has taken to increasingly green the community and lessen harmful environmental practices.

As a result, the quality of air in Sudbury is far better than many other regions in Ontario. The people in Sudbury certainly know how to do their part for the environment and ensure the future for their children. It is unfortunate the government, propped up by the Liberals, is unable to do the same.

Pay equity is another concern that is just as important as the other issues I have raised with Bill C-10. Within the Conservatives' bill are proposed changes to the Canadian Human Rights Act to prevent women from taking pay equity complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. If Bill C-10 passes, complaints about pay equity will no longer go through the Canadian Human Rights Commission, but through the Public Service Labour Relations Board. If women have a bargaining agent working on their behalf, it will result in a \$50,000 fine.

Pay equity was attacked in November's economic statement, and it is attacked again today in Bill C-10. Our caucus was and continues to be wholeheartedly against these proposed amendments, as are the other opposition parties. I am outraged by the proposed cuts to pay equity. I am saddened that these cuts, strongly condemned in the last session, are now okay enough for the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party to vote for their implementation.

Sudbury, like many other northern Ontario communities, draws its community spirit and cooperative nature from local unions. Sudbury is a better place because of the support and solidarity among the workers who characterize my community. This is another reason I cannot support Bill C-10.

Within the pages of the bill is a legislated public sector wage freeze for years. This measure could serve to invalidate the recently agreed collective agreements that secured wage increases above the austerity measures announced in budget 2009. This section also rolls back the RCMP's pay—

•(1100)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, the hon. member's time has expired.

The hon. chief government whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties, and I believe you will find agreement for the following motion:

That all votes required to dispose of the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2008-09 scheduled for later today be scheduled to take place at 3:00 p.m., and that the time taken up by the votes on the Supplementary Estimates (B) for 2008-09 or any other division today be not added to the end of government orders later today

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made a comment about there being only one real difference between last November's budget and today's budget, and that the Liberals will not be opposing the budget this time. That seems more than a little myopic. I presume the member opposite does not believe the only thing of significance is the voting that is happening in the House.

Government Orders

In fact, there are two very major differences, and they are affecting Canadians' lives, including the lives of his constituents in Sudbury. First, one real difference is that the situation for people is far more urgent today than it was in November, albeit it was serious then, and the historic job losses in January are evidence of that. Second, this budget, although so flawed that I gave it a C-, does incorporate some of the stimulus measures called for by the opposition, including the member's party.

My question is whether the member has taken the time to ask the folks laid off in Sudbury if they would prefer the outcome the member is vigorously defending and advocating, which is yet another delay of several months before a federal Parliament can possibly authorize action on their concerns.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, what I can do is write a report for the hon. member. Hopefully she will not put me on probation if I do not get it to her on time.

Recently I had the opportunity to speak to several workers who have been laid off in Sudbury. They are appalled that the EI reforms that have been talked about so much in the House are not being acted upon or supported by the Liberals, so in fact I have been talking to the people in my riding and I thank the hon. member for that question.

The important thing to recognize is that the NDP stands on its principles. Not even five minutes ago the hon. member had a peer stand and talk about the inaction by the government and about how the government has not caused any money to flow. How can we trust that it is going to do anything different?

•(1105)

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question follows up on the question asked by the member for Vancouver Quadra. It is very similar.

The NDP talks about assisting workers and talks about providing stimulus to the economy. What is it going to do? It is going to vote against a budget that significantly extends unemployment insurance benefits, contains a substantial increase in work-sharing programs, contains a \$12 billion infrastructure injection as a stimulus to our economy and provides assistance for the hardest-hit industries in Canada.

How can the member go back to his constituents and to Canadians and say that despite all that assistance and a major injection into our economy, he and his party are going to vote against it? How can he justify that?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, it is very easy for me to vote against the budget because there is nothing in the budget or in the implementation bill that does things for workers. It says people can get an extra five weeks if they qualify. Right now no one is qualifying. Ask the 700 people in Sudbury who have just lost their jobs. If they get severance pay, they cannot qualify for EI until that is exhausted.

There are many reforms needed in this system. Workers need a government that is actually going to stand up for workers and not pretend that a five-week extension is a way to give help. That is untrue.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague with great rapture. His comments were very succinct and clear about the problems with the budget, and I want to ask a very short question.

In my constituency office I am now getting calls from hundreds of people who are waiting for their EI claim to be processed. It is now taking the EI system seven to eight weeks just to process a claim. Because so many people are out of work and so many people are applying, they are not getting their cheques for 10 weeks down the road.

I want to ask the member how he feels about the idea we had in the New Democratic Party to eliminate the two-week waiting period and if his constituents are suffering in the same way as mine.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief.

I completely agree. We are seeing perhaps hundreds of people who have lost their jobs coming through our doors, people who do not qualify or who have to wait two weeks. They do not have an income, so what are they going to do?

I have a very quick story. A person who walked through my door had 699 hours and does not qualify for EI. He is one hour short. Flat out, that is horrible.

We need to fix EI.

* * *

BUSINESS 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 will find agreement for the following motion.

I move:

That all votes required to dispose of the Supplementary Estimates (B) 2008-09 scheduled for later today be scheduled to take place at 3:00 p.m., and that the time taken up by the votes on the Supplementary Estimates (B) for 2008-09 or any other division today be not added to the end of Government Orders later today.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

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.

Government Orders

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have a second opportunity to respond to the budgetary policies of the Conservative government.

Much has been said in this House about whether this budget is adequate in terms of providing the economic stimulus necessary to lift our country out of this deep recession. Members on all sides of the House have evaluated whether we have done enough to stabilize our banking industry, to free up credit, to assist corporations, to fight the unprecedented trade deficit, and to live up to the Prime Minister's international commitment to spend two per cent of GDP on stimulating our economy.

Many of the speeches, particularly on the government side of the House, have focused on whether the budget in the end will help those who in many cases actually contributed to creating the crisis. Much less has been said about whether and how this budget addresses those who are the innocent victims of this crisis. To a large extent, that is due to a fundamentally different view of what the economy is in the first place.

To the Conservatives, the economy is an almost supernatural construct that is and ought to be controlled by some invisible hand rather than by the government. From that perspective, it is the role of individuals simply to serve the economy. For me though, it should be the other way around. Our economy must serve Canadians. The economy is a man-made construct and the rules and regulations we put in place to guide it play a crucial role in determining its winners and losers. In that way, the economy becomes a moral issue. It must be judged by how many people it leaves behind. Since this budget was designed to stimulate our economy, it too must be judged by who it leaves behind. From that perspective, this budget is an abject failure.

We can do better for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have lost and who will lose their jobs because of what has happened to our economy. They did not cause the economic crisis that has robbed them of their livelihoods. Neither did the thousands who have seen their life savings and their dreams for a comfortable retirement taken away because of the rampant greed that right-wing governments unleashed and let run wild in the financial markets. We can do more for them and we must do more for them, so let me spend a few minutes this morning talking about these unwitting victims of the recession.

In January alone, 129,000 Canadians lost their jobs, and as many as half will not qualify for employment insurance benefits, yet the Prime Minister has pushed through another budget that leaves laid-off workers out in the cold. With this budget, not one additional unemployed worker becomes eligible for EI. Unfair waiting periods are kept in place and modest EI extensions only apply to those who already qualify but do nothing for those who do not. As Ken Georgetti, the president of the Canadian Labour Congress put it so succinctly, 60% of the unemployed were not getting benefits prior to this budget, and they will not get benefits now.

Here is what the government should have done in this budget. It should have improved eligibility. It should fix the rules so more workers who pay into EI can get benefits when they need them no matter what region or sector they work in. It should have ended unfair wait times. If most families are only two missed paycheques

away from poverty, it is cruel to make people wait weeks for EI benefits to kick in.

Economists say that improving EI will help spark our economy, generating \$1.60 worth of economic growth for each dollar that is disbursed in benefits. At the same time, that helps families find new work instead of falling into poverty and onto the welfare rolls. That is a win-win solution for tough times and yet it is nowhere to be found in the budget.

What about younger workers in this country? The deepening economic crisis is dimming the hopes of hundreds of thousands of young workers, but they are not getting any help from the Prime Minister's government. The numbers speak for themselves. In just three months, a jaw-dropping 75,000 Canadians aged 15 to 24 have lost their jobs. In January alone, 28,000 young Canadians lost their jobs, pushing their jobless rate to 12.7%. What the numbers do not show are untold thousands of young people who have given up hope or who are still looking for their very first jobs.

The recent Conservative budget provides nowhere near the economic stimulus needed to safeguard jobs in these troubled times. On youth joblessness, it has no strategy at all. That is not good enough. Today's young people will build tomorrow's Canada. They deserve the same chances that earlier generations enjoyed. By ignoring their hardship today, the government is creating bigger problems for the future.

• (1110)

But the victims of this recession are not just the young and working Canadians. Seniors were devastated when they saw their life savings and their dreams disappear in the stock market crash. They were being hit on all sides. For those who had workplace pensions, their sustainability was suddenly thrown into question. For those who had RRSPs, the value of their retirement nest egg plummeted. And for those who were already in RRIFs, they were doubly disadvantaged because the minimum withdrawal requirements meant that they would be eating deeply into their capital. For seniors, the crisis is perhaps even more impactful than it is for the hundreds of thousands of other Canadians who are also suffering.

When the Prime Minister takes his wait and see approach to providing further stimulus, he is suggesting that Canadians just need to hang in there and wait out the storm. However, seniors, by definition, do not have a lifetime to wait. They have spent their whole lives working hard and playing by the rules but now, everywhere they turn, every bill they open, they are paying more and getting less. That is hardly a retirement with dignity and respect. At a minimum, this budget should have increased the old age security so that seniors would not have to choose between paying for food to eat or for fuel for heat.

Government Orders

Seniors built our country and they paid taxes all of their lives. Now that they need those tax dollars to work for them, the government is abandoning them. They deserve so much better from this budget.

There is one group that is also predominantly made up of seniors who deserve special mention here, and that is our veterans. These men and women were willing to sacrifice their lives for our country and this budget could not even sacrifice a few dollars to live up to the commitments that the Prime Minister made to them.

The Conservatives made very specific promises to our veterans. They promised allied veterans that they could receive the Canadian war veterans allowance. They promised all widows of second world war and Korean war veterans access to the veterans independence program. They promised full compensation to veterans and civilians exposed to agent orange. They promised to redress the issue of reducing the SISIP LTD payments for medically released Canadian Forces personnel when they receive other disability pensions under the pension act. And they promised the so-called atomic veterans compensation for their nuclear exposure during trials in the South Pacific and during decontamination efforts at Chalk River after two accidents. Not a single one of those promises has been kept. The government should be embarrassed and ashamed. It is time to put veterans first; in fact, it is long past time.

Mr. Speaker, you are indicating that I am almost out of time, so I will not get the chance to talk about one more group that this budget failed.

I have talked about young Canadians, workers, seniors and veterans, but I very much wanted to talk about children as well. This budget has had a profoundly negative impact on their future.

The Prime Minister's decision to "get out of the child care business" means that his budget fails to renew an annual \$63.5 million transfer that funds 22,000 child care spaces in Ontario alone. This approach is painfully short-sighted. We know that quality early learning builds better futures for young people and a stronger economy for all of us. Each dollar invested in child care would inject at least two into our economy, a vital stimulus in times like these. It locks Canada into last place among industrialized nations on early learning. I wish I had just a little more time to expand on this very important issue, but I want to get one last issue on the record.

We are failing our children by not acting seriously on climate change. We did not inherit the earth from our grandparents; we have borrowed it from our kids. Yet, instead of investing seriously in the green economy, the government is pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into unsafe nuclear energy, coal and the unproven technology of carbon capture and storage. Anything green in this budget is purely cosmetic.

We had an opportunity to do the right thing for the environment, for jobs and for our children, but we failed to turn over a new green leaf. This is a decision that likely will haunt us for decades to come.

On behalf of all of the victims of this recession who this budget leaves behind, I cannot do anything other than vote against Bill C-10.

●(1115)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has a greater responsibility than the other opposition parties. The NDP has said that its members are opposing the budget. They always will. They did not care about reading it.

I want to ask the member about the issue of putting the interests of the people ahead of partisan interests and dealing with one's principles. At some point in time, parliamentarians have to consider that if we bring the government down, this place will close down for another couple of months and it will take about another month before it gets cranked up again. Some members will leave, and new ones will come; there is the start-up thing. In the meantime, the condition of the people of Canada will have deteriorated even further. By the time yet another budget was introduced in a budget speech, it would be months.

In my own view, notwithstanding the concerns I have about some of the things in the budget, I am pleased that at least some of the collective opposition's suggestions have been incorporated into the budget. They will be stimulative. They will be helpful to Canadians. It is a lesser evil, but it is a better outcome than going to another election at this time. I want to know what the member's view is.

●(1120)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate this question because, frankly, I think the people who are watching the debate today do not care at all about political parties. They do not even care about politicians. Right now, they are worried about whether they are able to keep their jobs and homes and whether they actually can provide a brighter future for their kids.

We have an obligation in this House not to do what the Prime Minister did, which was to create a budget to save his job, nor to do what the Leader of the Opposition did, which was to look for some strategic advantage to buy himself enough time to grow as a leader in his new role and worry about his job. I think it is time that all members in this House made worrying about the jobs of their constituents their number one priority.

We lost 129,000 jobs in January alone. We have lost 250,000 jobs in the last three months. We are presented with a budget that purports over the next two years to create 190,000 jobs, if we are lucky. That still leaves us 50,000 jobs behind and the numbers are growing. Canadians want us to put their jobs first. Leave the partisan politics aside. We need to do what is right for our constituents. Even the Leader of the Opposition has enumerated all of the ways in which this budget fails his constituents. I would encourage him to join us by voting against this budget implementation bill.

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the points which I think is missed by the official opposition is that there is an \$8 billion hole in the budget. I know the Liberals are going to ask for reports three or four times a year. The document we have in front of us says that the government will sell off \$2 billion in assets, that is, the government will sell buildings in a buyer's market, and it is somehow going to find \$2 billion in government savings through cuts. Does the member think that is a sensible thing? Does she think that the official opposition actually read the document earnestly, or did the Liberals just want to pass over that \$8 billion hole in the budget?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I think the hole is very much a real one, and as the budget numbers show, it is a hole of \$8 billion.

It is outrageous that in this fire sale the government is contemplating selling public assets that Canadian tax dollars helped to build and maintain. Now, to balance its own books in this shell game, we are seeing the shuffling around of potential sales at a time when the value of those assets could not be any lower. Canadians deserve better. More important, Canadians deserve a budget that puts their interests first, where the dollars that are in the budget are actually accounted for and not just by the official opposition saying that it will hold the government to account and demand a report. That opposition party truly is soft on crime. The Liberal Party is letting the government get away with things it never should, and that is a crime.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues in the NDP today in speaking against Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill.

I, like many members of Parliament, held consultations in my local community of East Vancouver to talk to people about what they wanted to see in the budget. People really focused on the essential bread and butter issues of what they need to see happen in order to get through their daily lives, to make it to the end of the month, to put food on the table, to make sure that they have enough money for housing and for their kids to go to school, and to be able to afford a decent quality of life. That is what people were most worried about, particularly in the middle of an economic crisis where so many people were losing their jobs.

In examining the budget in detail, we have come to the conclusion that it fails on two fundamental levels. First, it does not address those essential issues that people are facing in their communities, and second, and what is particularly offensive and outrageous, is that the budget is being used as a cover to move in all kinds of outrageous proposals and rollbacks that would impact working people right across the country.

The Conservative government is not the first government to do that. I remember a Liberal budget that was billed as an education budget. The Liberals moved in proposals that would dramatically impact students in terms of bankruptcy laws. Those proposals were buried in the back pages.

Just a couple of budgets ago the Conservative government used the cover of a budget to bring in massive changes to the citizenship and immigration system. We have not forgotten that either.

Today, the government is using the budget to bring in a wage restraint and a wage freeze program, and to roll back collective agreements. The budget is being used to leverage an attack on women's equality in this country and to turn back the clock on decades of struggle for pay equity. It is doing this by removing the choice that women have to negotiate for pay equity and the use of the human rights system and the court system to ensure that their grievances and legitimate claims for pay equity are heard.

Why on earth would that be in the budget? The answer is because the government is focused on an ideological agenda that is about dismantling the rights that people have fought for and won over many decades. On those two fundamental levels, the budget is a failure.

When I talked to the people at the budget consultations in my riding, the issue that came forward most forcibly was the issue of the crisis in affordable housing.

In B.C. there are up to 15,000 homeless people. In metro Vancouver the 2008 homeless count was 2,600 people in a 24 hour period. The overall homelessness rate in Vancouver has risen 32% since 2005 and street level homelessness has increased by 364% in greater Vancouver since 2002. That is from the metro homeless count.

What is even more disturbing is that aboriginal people make up over 30% of the homeless population in Vancouver even though they make up only 2% of the overall Canadian population.

What makes this housing crisis in my community even worse is that it is facing a vacancy rate that is in effect zero. Tenants are being evicted. They cannot find any kind of affordable place to stay. Renovations are going on and people are being booted out on the street. The crisis in the city of Vancouver is really hitting people hard.

We had seriously hoped that the budget would provide a real stimulus to housing construction not only in Vancouver but right across the country. Instead of a long-term strategy to build affordable housing in this country, we see a one shot deal that will not even address the broad spectrum of housing needs.

● (1125)

Although there is money earmarked for people with disabilities or seniors, there is nothing, for example, for aboriginal people who live off reserve. There is nothing to develop or actually guarantee that new social housing units will be built or that cooperative housing, which has been a huge success story across Canada, will be either refurbished or new units developed. It is no wonder that people like Mayor Gregor Robertson was quoted in the press as saying:

It looks like we'll need to be creative and more aggressive at trying to ensure these dollars create housing for those in greatest need in Vancouver.

He went on to say:

It's confounding, because our homelessness crisis, and specifically the aboriginal homelessness issue, is well-known across the country. I don't know why they would limit our ability to apply these dollars where they're most needed.

Government Orders

That is the mayor of Vancouver who is grappling with a serious housing crisis in our city. He is doing his part and even the provincial government has begun to make some movement to address this issue, but what has the federal government done? What is there really in the budget that will ensure that money flows to the municipalities?

Yesterday the Federation of Canadian Municipalities held a briefing and pointed out that it has serious issues with the way the infrastructure money will be flowing. It wants to see a per capita formula, so we can ensure that the money gets directly into those projects and into those municipalities.

At this point there is no knowledge and no understanding, so we are faced with the very real possibility that just like the billions of dollars that were earmarked in the previous budget for infrastructure, that these dollars will never be spent because they have to be matched by other levels and because the process for having the money actually implemented is so onerous that it may actually never be spent.

Maybe that is what the Conservatives had planned all along, that they would book the money there but would actually frustrate the system so much that it would never get to the people who really need it.

I also want to add that people in British Columbia are suffering under double injury. Not only are they facing the consequences of the recession, the loss of jobs and not being able to get EI or adequate housing, they are also facing cuts from the B.C. government. We have just experienced a whole slew of cuts in our legal aid system. It is very serious when we have a study from the Legal Services Society of B.C. that found that more than 80% of low income British Columbians are dealing with legal issues that are serious and difficult to resolve, yet both the quality and quantity of legal services available to low income people continues to erode.

When people are facing the lack of support and services on the provincial side and then they see on the federal side that they are getting hit again, it makes people feel pretty bad. It makes people feel that they do not have a hope about what will happen in the future. These are just some of the examples of what people are actually experiencing.

When I did my budget consultation, one of the issues that came through very strongly was the fact that Canada is at the bottom of the OECD ranking for child care provision. There had been hope that the budget finally would include a commitment to a national child care program.

The NDP worked very hard in the last Parliament to get through a bill by a majority of members of Parliament to set up a universal, accessible, affordable, not-for-profit child care system. The government had the opportunity to build on that strength and on that vote and to finally include something in the budget that would recognize this importance, not just focusing exclusively on the number of child care spaces but also on the affordability of child care and ensuring that there were adequate wages for child care workers and stable, long-term funding for our child care centres. None of those things were in the budget.

I want to end by just making a point about EI. Surely, this was the greatest travesty in the budget. What a horror story that workers who have been laid off or thrown out of work, who have paid into their EI diligently over so many years, only to find that they are no longer eligible. We have 65% of women who are no longer eligible for EI. We find this the most reprehensible thing that is contained in the budget. It is appalling that in a recession, when people most need help because they have been thrown out of work, they do not even qualify for the program to which they themselves have contributed.

• (1130)

For all of these reasons, we in the NDP find this budget to be a failure. We have fought it as hard as we can. It is very disturbing that the official opposition members have fallen right off the job and have capitulated to this budget. That is what they will have to live with. We know what we have done in terms of opposing the direction this budget has taken because it does not serve the people of Canada.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP had already predetermined that it was going to vote against the budget, regardless. We should explore the regardless because what that would have meant was that Parliament would be dissolved, there would necessarily be an election, after which there would be a formation of government by either my party or the party opposite, the selection of a cabinet, the recall of Parliament, a speech from the throne, and a presentation of the budget and a budget implementation bill.

If we add all of that up on a parliamentary calendar, we would probably be in the middle of August, with the greater likelihood that it could be October, before the Parliament of Canada could respond to the needs of Canadians. That is the choice that the NDP and Bloc have made.

I ask the hon. member this question. Is she comfortable with the choice that she and her party have made to essentially postpone the response to this economic crisis until at least the end of this year or possibly this time next year?

• (1135)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has some historical blinkers on or is trying to self-censor himself in terms of what happened. It seems to me he should be asking this question of the Conservative government that he is now apparently very close to in terms of what actually took place in the House. He will remember it was the government that suspended the business of the House. It prorogued the House and shut down all of the business that we in the NDP were prepared to do.

The member was one of the members on this side of the House who signed the letter which made it clear there was an alternative, and we did not have to have an election. This idea that somehow the choice is to either go along with a terrible budget or move into an election, of course, is a completely false premise, and the member knows that. However, I guess it is easy to spin things in a certain way now that the Liberals have made their choice to support the Conservative budget.

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All I can say is that we in the NDP came to a very important conclusion that given everything that has happened, we do not have confidence in the Prime Minister nor the Conservative government in terms of the decisions they have made, the direction they are taking this country, and how they have so badly let people down. We made our decision based on principle and merit, and we feel very comfortable with it.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Vancouver East for speaking so passionately about the things that not only she believes in but the NDP believes in. I would like her to comment on some of the measures in the budget. There are many non-monetary measures in the budget. I would like her to tell me how they are going to stimulate the economy.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the serious problems in the budget. When we examine it in detail, we can see there are many measures and proposals that not only will not contribute anything in terms of stimulating the economy but will actually hurt people.

One of the really serious things is rolling back the collective agreements. British Columbia had that experience with bill 29 when Gordon Campbell ripped up the whole principle of collective agreements and negotiating. That was fought all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Luckily and thankfully, the bill was overturned by the Supreme Court. Lo and behold, the Conservative government is doing exactly the same thing.

The member is entirely correct. Those measures in the budget have nothing to do with economic stimulus. They attack people's basic rights, whether they are women or workers. This is something people feel very demoralized about because we expect a budget that actually addresses budgetary priorities that will help people, not measures and broad proposals that are actually going to hurt people.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to join in the debate on Bill C-10, the act to implement the budget measures. For the public who are watching this, I am holding up a copy of the bill, which is about an inch thick. The bill was tabled in the House a number of days ago, I believe on February 6, and it contains some 500 pages of measures that are used to implement the budget and amend a whole series of acts. Also contained in these measures, as the previous speaker just indicated, not just budgetary measures, but measures that are designed to change public policy in important areas.

I will use a couple of examples referred to earlier in the debate as poison pills as part of the budget. One example is the change to pay equity. Pay equity, as we know, is an important human right. The importance of equality of men and women is recognized in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is also recognized in the Canadian human rights code and the Canadian Human Rights Commission has been a vehicle for the achievement and the definition of those rights in this country for many years.

It is important to understand what the government has done. The Conservatives said that these rights were no longer subject to review, adjudication and enforcement by the Canadian Human Rights Commission but that they must be done through collective bargaining. Now that sounds on the surface reasonable, but I practised labour law for in excess of 25 years in this country and I

will give a bargaining 101. Bargaining 101 is when one side puts its proposals on the table and the other side puts its proposals on the table and then both sides negotiate. Since when did human rights become negotiable? In every set of bargaining, people put their wants and their demands on the table, which could be 5, 10 or 12. They might want a pay increase, more holidays and so on, but now they are asking for equality too. The other side agrees but wants to know what the people will give up to get equality. The answer should be "nothing" because people are entitled to equality as a human right as recognized in the Canadian human rights code and embodied in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

However, the government has now made that a subject of negotiation. In the public sector there are men and women. The men are being told that if they want equal rights for women, then they must give up something in terms of pay, in terms of vacation or in terms of benefits. What are we doing here? Are we setting up a conflict between men and women in the public sector? Is that what the government wants?

Ms. Dawn Black: It seems to be.

Mr. Jack Harris: It seems to be, my colleague says. That is what I call a poison pill and it should not be put up with.

That is one good example of the kinds of things contained in this budget that are not really economic stimulus measures or even budget measures at all.

Another one is the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. One might wonder what that has to do with stimulating the economy. The argument is that any project less than \$10 million is no longer subject to any review whatsoever or any standards set by the Navigable Waters Protection Act that protect our environment and the environment of the streams and rivers that are navigable waters. Is that an economic stimulation? No, it is not. It is, in fact, a diminishing of the standards of protection of the environment just because the project is less than \$10 million.

Many a bridge, many a diversion and many an activity in this area cost less than \$10 million and the amount of damage that can be done is considerable. Is this time sensitive? At the end of two years, is this gone? Is this designed to fast-track projects? No. This is designed to lower environmental standards and the protection of navigable waters, something that obviously the government desires and the official opposition is supporting.

● (1140)

Those are two of the many examples of how the budget fails in its own standard of providing economic stimulus in attempting to, supposedly, get the money out the door.

Government Orders

The government likes to criticize the NDP for holding up the government from getting economic stimulus out the door. We are doing our job to ensure that the people of Canada know what the government is doing, that we cannot take a bill like this and push it through the House in two or three days and expect no one to debate it or even know what is going on. This is the means for the public to know what the government is doing in this one-inch thick piece of legislation.

I have talked about a couple of poison pills. In addition to poison pills in the budget bill there is something that I would call more of a bombshell. That is the treatment of my province, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, by a significant huge penalty. The government decided to change the rules in the O'Brien formula and the application of the Atlantic accord to the detriment of my province to the tune of \$1.5 billion over the next three years.

To put that in perspective, this is not about capping equalization payments. This is not even equalization payments. This is a formula designed to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador is the primary beneficiary of its offshore resources. That fight was fought by Newfoundland and Labrador. It started off with the Atlantic accord of 1985. What we have is the government changing the rules because the rules work in favour of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The government does not like that, so it is going to change it: \$1.5 billion of backdoor changes to the rules, unilaterally effected by the government with no consultation and no foreknowledge. In fact, it was only ferreted out in the budget lock-up by officials from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador when they saw the number for transfers to Newfoundland and Labrador reduced by \$460 million. It is a shocking treatment of a partner in Confederation.

We know that if the comparable number was applied to the province of Quebec, it would be \$14 billion. If it were applied to Ontario, it would be \$22 billion. The number is \$3,000 for every man, woman and child in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a bombshell and it should be recognized as such.

I know my colleagues from Newfoundland and Labrador in the House voted against the budget once but I understand that was a one-time permission granted by their leader and that they will be supporting the budget implementation bill and all other budget measures. That action speaks for itself and I will not say any more about that.

We have a budget bill that not only has these poison pills but it also does not do the job for the people who actually need the help. The previous speaker, my colleague, referred to the fact that not one other person in the country is now eligible for employment insurance in the worst downturn that we have had since the Great Depression. The government has added five weeks to the back end. If people are unlucky enough to be on employment insurance for the full length of the existing measure, they will get an extra five weeks.

We have had someone cost out that measure and it will cost the government \$11 million. "Thank you very much", say the unemployed in this country. It is \$11 million when the budget that was presented to the House projects a \$64 billion deficit over two years. That is not helping people who need the help.

The budget has failed those people and the people of this country. It does not deserve the support of the House and certainly does not deserve the support of the official opposition.

What is ironic is that every time members from the official opposition ask questions in the House and complain about the budget what do they get? The government answers, "You supported it. You're with us on this one", and the official opposition can say no more.

We are not prepared to do that. We are here to fight the budget and we are here to fight the government.

● (1145)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for St. John's East for a very detailed criticism of the budget. It shows what the real intent is behind the budget bill and the real direction the government wants to take.

We have in the House the official opposition, the Liberal Party, endorsing the budget despite the fact that for Newfoundland and Labrador, as the member so clearly pointed out, there is a major grab basically taken out of the pockets of the men, women and children of Newfoundland and Labrador of thousands of dollars for each and every inhabitant. The Liberals, even those from Newfoundland and Labrador, are supporting the budget. By voting for the budget implementation bill, they are supporting the Conservative government in its attack on Newfoundland and Labrador.

Today, unfortunately, we will see for the 50th time the Liberals prop up the Conservatives. I would like the member to comment on the inappropriateness of the official opposition to simply be here to prop up for the 50th time a Conservative right wing agenda.

● (1150)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, Canadians must be very discouraged, when over 60% of them voted against the governing party in the last election, to see it now carrying out its agenda with the help of the second largest party in the House, the Liberals. The expectation seems to be that the Liberal Party will somehow be rewarded for that in the next election. I think Canadians may have another point of view on that because they well know that there is at least one party standing up in this House to support them.

I would like to read what a professor of law at Osgoode Hall Law School said about the budget:

Tuesday's budget shamelessly massaged numbers and tables to give a false impression that the tax cuts favour low-income earners. In true [Prime Minister] form, he has used the budget as cover to advance the Conservatives' vision of a good tax system – one that is less redistributive, and encourages heavier reliance on private savings to meet citizens' needs.

Whether one likes this vision or not, it is fundamentally inconsistent with the short-term goals of stimulating consumer spending and helping those who lose their jobs in the recession. The official opposition should have called him on that.

That fact is, it did not.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's dilemma with respect to his province and the unwarranted attack by the Prime Minister on Newfoundland and Labrador.

Government Orders

However, I would like to correct a statement about the Liberal Party agenda. The Liberal Party agenda is pretty straightforward. It is the well-being of Canadians. In our view, there is absolutely no question that that well-being is best served by immediate help given to Canadians facing this historic economic disaster.

Does the member believe that holding out for a perfect budget, which is a chimera, something we may never see, is a better strategy for the people who are losing their jobs than giving them immediate help rather than waiting months for the implementation of some other potentially perfect budget?

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, we do not live in a perfect world but I am assuming, since the member is a member of the Liberal caucus, that she was one of those who signed a document back on December 1 offering to participate in a government that would immediately deliver the economic stimulus that was needed in this country. In fact, a proposal was made to form a coalition government to do just that. This was done while the government was projecting surpluses for the next three years, ignoring the fact that there was a real need. It obviously did not anticipate that there would be a job loss of 129,000 jobs in December. It did not recognize the need nor did it want the stimulus.

I am assuming that she was joining with us in saying that stimulus had to happen starting in December, not now or later. We intend to ensure that people understand that we were there to do just that. We are still ready to do just that but this is not the budget to do it with.

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member from Newfoundland a question about equalization. I know he is interested in this.

His province and my province of Nova Scotia were given the opportunity to have a different equalization formula as an option in the 2007 budget implementation speech. That option included a 3.5% escalator clause every year until 2020. The budget speech says that all equalization increases will be capped at the rate of overall growth of the economy, which is about zero percent. That contradicts the legislation that was passed just a little over a year ago that says that Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador have a 3.5% automatic cumulative escalator clause until 2020. I wonder if he is aware that that has been taken away now.

There is a contradiction. The words in the budget say that all equalization be capped, but the legislation says that Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador have a 3.5% increase every year, cumulative until 2020. Which will happen?

• (1155)

Mr. Jack Harris: Mr. Speaker, I know the member has a great interest in that issue and has stood steadfast for truth, justice and the right thing to do despite some personal costs to himself. I congratulate him for that.

Unfortunately, I cannot answer for the government. The government says one thing and does another, as it did to Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. These rules that it talked about were actually imposed on Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. They were not agreed upon. Now that the rules work, whether in legislation or otherwise, to the benefit of these provinces, the

government sets out the changes. These are not strictly equalization. These are designed to be offsets for natural resources.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the budget because it does not address the serious problems that Canadians are facing.

Over the past 20 years, the NDP has brought into the House the point that for most families in Canada, their real income has decreased. We have had a slow and quiet economic crisis in our country. For 20 years, incomes have continued to fall for the middle-class, for the working-class, for the poorest of Canadians. They are earning less now than they were 20 years ago. The NDP has been pointing this out, yet the Liberals and Conservatives have simply refused to address any of the economic realities.

That crisis has continued and, more recent, has become a full-blown economic crisis, which shows that the economic policies of the past 20 years have certainly not worked and have not provided a foundation to withstand this full-blown economic crisis.

The Conservatives support corporate CEOs. They support banking CEOs. They support corporate lawyers. These are the only people Conservative members are really worried about. They are giving lots of money in corporate tax breaks to the profitable banking sector and to other profitable sectors. They say that they are addressing these economic fundamentals. At the NDP end of the House, which overflows on both sides of the aisle because of our recent increase in the number of seats, we fundamentally disagree.

When a worker in Chicoutimi is earning less now to keep a roof over his or her head than he or she was 20 years ago, that is a fundamental economic problem. When Alberta families see their farm receipts go down, that is an economic problem. In fact, Alberta farmers have had the worst level of farm receipts than farmers anywhere in the country. All Canadians should share these problems. When a softwood lumber worker is laid off because of the government's ill-thought out and irresponsible softwood lumber sell-out, that should concern Parliament.

For 20 years, we have been sleepwalking with right-wing economic policies, whether it has been Liberal government or Conservative government policies. Nothing has really changed. They are similar. It is very difficult to tell them apart. Conservative and Liberal speeches might be different, but on the fundamental economic issues those members have exactly the same approach.

While governments have been sleepwalking for 20 years, the NDP has been warning them that the problems would come to a head, and they now have. We have seen the collapse of our economy in many parts of the country. Thousands of jobs have been lost across the country in the softwood industry, after the softwood sell-out. In the last 90 days, a quarter of a million families have lost a breadwinner.

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Each one of these individuals is not a statistic. They are real Canadians. They are real human beings who are suffering because of the absurdly ideological economic policies of the government, rather than putting into place sensible economic policies that would help families sustain jobs in our country.

I represent the riding of Burnaby—New Westminster, one of the epicentres of foolish Conservative and Liberal policies. The softwood lumber sell-out has led to the closure of three softwood mills in my riding and in my community. Hundreds of softwood workers lost their jobs because of the softwood sell-out. They can be added to the tens of thousands of Canadians across the country who have their job because we have no manufacturing policy in place, no real export policy in place, aside from an ideological rant around free trade, and no sectoral industrial strategies in place.

All of those foolish decisions, the deregulation that Conservatives and Liberals have put forward, have led to the crisis we are facing now.

Since we are not talking about statistics but real people, let me read an email I received from one of my constituents, talking about employment insurance. He says, "I'm a 49-year-old licensed heavy duty mechanic who recently got laid off in my line of work. I was at my local Canada Service Centre in Westminster this morning trying to fill out my reports for benefits".

● (1200)

He talks about another older worker, a 60-year-old truck driver, who tried to electronically make an application for EI medical benefits. He has cancer in his eye. He has never used a computer in his life. The guy helping him had to leave him on his own. Later on in the email, he talks about it being virtually impossible to talk to a human being.

On top of all that, those workers, half of them being laid off, will be unable to access employment insurance. That is a fundamental tragedy. How Liberals and Conservatives could work together to pass a budget that does not give a single Canadian, of that quarter million who have lost their jobs in the last 90 days, access to employment insurance is a fundamental tragedy.

The budget does not help those Canadians. It does not provide a social safety net. It continues the gutting of the social safety net because successive governments, Liberal and Conservative, have favoured big banks and banking CEOs rather than those people on Main Street who pay their salaries. They have completely forgotten about ordinary Canadians. Shame on them.

The budget provides a smoke and mirrors approach to economic stimulus. Essentially, as we well know, virtually all the money is tied funding. Taxpayers at a city and provincial levels have to cough up first before the government will provide any sort of economic stimulus.

Contrast that with President Obama in the United States, who is putting forward federal funding first. He is saying that, under the buy America act, it has to be spent on an American workers.

In Canada we have this ideological right-wing whacko theory that we cannot protect Canadian jobs and we cannot invest in Canadian

workers. Any of the stimulus package that does come out will go to foreign firms, foreign workers. It is absurd.

Half of the taxpayers who have paid their taxes with diligence and who have paid for employment insurance for years in the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of 1930s are essentially cut out of getting employment insurance. Whatever stimulus that grudgingly comes out of the government will go to support foreign workers overseas.

We certainly cannot trust the government for reasons that I do not need to go into. It said that it would not nominate senators and it has put 18 of them in the senate. It said that we would have fixed election dates. It broke that promise, too. The government is a serial promise-breaker.

If there is any funding that comes out, if it does not break the promise again, essentially that money will go to support foreign workers overseas. There is no buy Canada provision in place, unlike in the United States where it has put in place buy America provisions.

This is the real tragedy of the principle around this budget. Liberals, for the 50th time tonight, will prop up the Harper agenda, a right-wing agenda. Yet the Liberals have gall to go back to their constituents and pretend that somehow they are fighting that agenda. They are not. They are the major contributing party to the agenda. They are ones who, for 50th time, have allowed the government to continue many of the former right-wing Liberal policies, running roughshod over the lives and quality of life of ordinary Canadians.

What is in the budget? We are the only party that has read the budget implementation bill. We are the only party that brought it in. If Conservatives and Liberals have read the budget implementation bill, why are they in agreement with gutting environmental assessments?

Are they in agreement with gutting pay equity for women, essentially eliminating that right of the majority of Canadians to press for equal pay for work of equal value? Liberals are supporting the gutting of pay equity.

Foreign ownership will be increased, as set out in the bill. Canada student loans will be bludgeoned. Students who are highly in debt will be pursued by the government because of new powers. Collective agreements will be gutted.

For those reasons, we are voting against this act.

● (1205)

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is very straightforward. Since the weekend, I have heard from a number of constituents who do not understand one thing. It seems to them, and it certainly seems to me, that there are a lot of non-monetary, non-money, parts to the bill.

Would the member like to make comment about why that would be? It is supposed to be a budget bill.

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Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Essentially, it is an attack on any sort of progressive legislation. It is an attack on collective agreements, ripping them up after the fact. It is an attack on students, creating new penalties around Canada's student loans when we know student debt levels are at record levels.

It allows unrestrained foreign takeovers of Canadian companies. We have seen how well that has worked with some of the so-called guarantees the government received, which are worth nothing. The government is basically saying, "Take over whatever is left that is in Canadian hands".

It also attacks the principle of pay equity, a principle for which the New Democratic Party has long fought in the House, and we continue to press for that.

It is an attack on environmental assessments. How could anybody who has been involved with the environment simply allow the ripping up of environmental assessments? It is absurd.

However, the Liberals are supporting all of these policies. They will stand in the House and say that they are supporting the budget. They are propping the government for the 50th time. Then they will call for some broad principle and say that they are really opposed to all these right-wing measures, but they will vote for them anyway".

Canadians should not be fooled. The Liberals and the Conservatives have the same agenda.

If we really want a progressive government, we will have to triple the NDP caucus again. In the next House the NDP will be able to provide the progressive leadership most Canadians seek.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the comments of the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. I want to acknowledge the member as being a master of righteous indignation. I appreciate the member's list of deficiencies of the current government, and I share those views. I agree with much of the critique of the budget. It could have been much better, and I would give it a C-. It was disappointing to see what was tabled.

The member talks about principles. Listening to all the speeches about the past 20 years, the past fall, and so on is all very interesting, but for people who have lost their jobs, it is not very relevant. The member's principles seems to be to oppose, no matter what. That was demonstrated when the NDP members stated they would oppose the budget well before it was written.

The choice is clear. Have laid off sawmill workers in his riding asked the member to make people wait for months for any assistance at this time, or would they prefer the member clear the way for immediate action to stimulate the economy, help people—

• (1210)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I will give to give the member for Burnaby—New Westminster time to respond.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, that is the problem. We are the only party that actually read the budget implementation bill. We know that not a single additional Canadian will have access to employment insurance at a time when the number of employed is exploding, a quarter of a million in the last 90 days alone. The Liberals

are saying it is okay, that the unemployed sawmill worker in New Westminster does not have access to employment insurance. They do not care whether workers cannot feed their family or keep a roof over their head.

We disagree. We had an agreement and that agreement included substantial changes to employment insurance. This was the alternative that the new Liberal leader faced, and he betrayed Canadians by going with the Conservatives and their right-winged economic agenda.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise proudly today to oppose Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill.

It is quite interesting when one does a quick analysis of what has happened since the financial crisis hit, which is a huge indictment of a capitalist system run amok and now attempts are being made to salvage it by bills like this one and other attempts by other right-wing governments around the globe. It is so symptomatic of how the crisis came about. It was based hugely on greed, incompetence and corruption, particularly in the United States, but its tentacles have spread right across the globe. Because we in Canada are so integrated, part of the globalization formula which both major political parties in this country have advocated for so long, we got caught in the crisis and we are going to get caught in it even more. In spite of the Bank of Canada's prognostications, the reality is we have not hit bottom and we are still some distance from hitting bottom based on the way our economic system works.

We saw the government, both during the election and even more so after, continue to be in complete denial of the crisis we were faced with. That has not ended. The budget is a continuation of the government's psychological bent of refusing to recognize reality. It is living in a fantasy world and the budget reflects it.

It also reflects a good deal of cynicism on the part of the government. It follows the same pattern the Prime Minister personally has followed for so long in taking every opportunity to push his ideological right-wing agenda. We see it in this bill in so many ways. It is a continuation of his broken promises, as we have just heard from my colleague, whether it was in appointing people to the unelected Senate, which he promised so vehemently he would never do, or whether it was calling the election in the fall. I remember watching him a number of times give speeches in advance of making that decision, and in advance of fixing the dates for elections in this country, a policy our party has supported for a long time, and the vehemence with which he spoke, and then watching him breach that promise so easily at the first possible opportunity to pursue his own personal objective of trying to get a majority government. We see that continued in the budget.

The Prime Minister stood in this House and he stood before the cameras of all our TV channels, all of our media, and said that he was going to change, that he was going to stop having every single item, no matter how important, be a confidence vote. He was not going to do that anymore.

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Then what do we see in Bill C-10? Buried in this bill, which of course is a confidence vote since it is the budget implementation bill, there are at least half a dozen items that have nothing to do with the budget. They are policy issues in a number of different ways, but they are items that the Prime Minister wants from an ideological standpoint. Whether it is attacking the labour movement in this country, or whether it is attacking women over pay equity, he has buried a whole bunch of provisions in this bill, which is now going to be a confidence vote, which compels the so-called official opposition to support it, given the pledges it has made.

• (1215)

This bill is going to go through at some point, unless the Liberals finally come to their senses and maybe stand on principle, but that seems to be a contradiction in terms when we are talking about the Liberal Party. Unless that happens, a bunch of bills will go through the House comprised in Bill C-10, which should not be confidence votes and we should be allowed to vote on those bills without that hanging over our heads. I do not think there is anything more offensive and I say that personally.

I remember watching the finance minister speak about pay equity in his November financial update. In terms of the tone, the words he used and even his body language, I was offended by the vehemence with which he was attacking women and the movement around pay equity that has gone on for decades and still has not completely resolved itself. Then at the next opportunity the government almost hides it in Bill C-10.

We listen to the President of the Treasury Board try to justify it by, quite frankly, as my colleague from Winnipeg said, misleading the House about the provisions in provincial legislation and claiming it is the same. It is not. It is nowhere close. The epitome of it is the government is saying it will get done through collective bargaining. It was interesting to hear my eloquent friend from Newfoundland and Labrador point out that human rights are not bargained. It is either a human right or it is not and it is not bargained. That is what the government is doing in trying to lead us to believe that is the mechanism it is going to use.

To put the lie to that, one only has to read the bill, and I invite the Conservatives to do that to understand what is really in it, if collective bargaining does not work and a number of women say they did not get their pay equity and they want to pursue it, there is a mechanism to pursue it, but their union, their organized support mechanism, cannot help them. In fact, if it tries to help them, it will be fined \$50,000. For every incident it will be fined \$50,000 for doing what it should be doing in terms of its responsibility vis-à-vis its membership. If that does not put a lie to the real intent of the government, I do not know what would.

Madam Speaker, are you signalling that my time is up?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): No, I am concerned about the language. All hon. members in the House know that the word “lie” is inappropriate parliamentary language and I have just heard it repeated, so I was concerned.

• (1220)

Mr. Joe Comartin: I think within the context, Madam Speaker, it was not unparliamentary, but I will go on to other items.

There could have been so many other things in the budget as opposed to trying to hide things. We have heard about the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the attack on the environmental movement, and all of what we have accomplished so far being undermined by that.

When I read that part of Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, it immediately brought back a conversation I had with a public servant at the municipal level in my riding when I was doing the prebudget consultation work. I asked to be provided with a list of all the projects available if we could get a decent stimulus program going. I specifically asked whether these projects were ready to go, including if they needed an environmental assessment and if it had been done. He said to me in response, “Every single one of these has had an environmental assessment, if it is needed”. That is true generally with municipal projects across the country. Therefore, this provision is absolutely unnecessary. It is simply an attack.

I want to conclude by saying there is so much hypocrisy and ideology in this bill. The bottom line is there is not going to be an effective mechanism to stimulate the economy.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives continually tell us to read the bill and read the budget, but they certainly do not expect parliamentarians to do that, because if all parliamentarians read the budget bill, the vast majority of them would actually be appalled at what is in the bill.

I am particularly concerned about the attack on the Canadian Human Rights Act. What that has to do with the supposed economic stimulus package is clearly worthy of debate. It states specifically in the budget bill that an employer who has been found to be engaged in a discriminatory practice against women is now protected by all the legal weight in Canada. That is sitting right on page 388. It clearly lays out how employers who have been engaged in discriminatory practices are protected. It is not even a question; if they have, they are protected. Yet that is in a supposed budget implementation bill that is supposed to be addressing the biggest economic crisis since the 1930s.

I would like to ask the hon. member, how can it be that members of Parliament representing such diverse regions of Canada could sit in the House and allow the Canadian Human Rights Act to be so arbitrarily trashed in such an ideological fashion against women workers in this country?

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, the point my friend from Timmins—James Bay is raising is in keeping with the line I was making in terms of the ideological underpinnings that are quite obvious in the budget bill. I will extend that, because he has caught the point already that there is an attack on the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

In the justice committee there is a motion from the Conservatives, which has now been approved, for us to study that, with a clear indication from that side of the table that they want to gut the human rights legislation with regard specifically to section 13. There are reflections of that here.

Government Orders

Going back to that \$50,000 fine, one of the areas one would want to access would be the Canadian Human Rights Commission if one were in a pay equity dispute with the government or one's employer. By making it impossible, in effect, to take that on as an individual, it is undermining the usefulness of the commission and the serious important role it plays in protecting human rights in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh.

International Women's Day is coming up in March. Yet this budget directly attacks pay equity, while women today already earn only about 71¢ for every dollar earned by a man.

What is more, we heard one of our colleagues say today that the NDP is not prepared to stand up for Canadians. But that is precisely what we do in the NDP: we stand up for what Canadians are really asking for.

Can my colleague comment on the impact this budget will have on pay equity for women?

• (1225)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh has one minute to respond to the question.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Madam Speaker, I will reply in English, since I speak faster in English than in French.

[*English*]

The reality is that Manitoba actually increased the ratio of the amount that women make in that province vis-à-vis men, by a significant amount in the way it treated pay equity. We will see the opposite with this legislation.

In particular, the Conservatives are changing the way pay equity is being defined. They are not even using that term, other than one occasion in that part of the bill, and they are coming up with new terminology which clearly will undermine the role the legislation can play in protecting women. It will be just the opposite and we will see that gap between men's and women's wages in this country more than likely widen rather than shrink.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud to rise on the issue of Bill C-10 and its implementation.

The context in which we have to discuss this issue today is the root causes of how we came to this international economic catastrophe, how the Conservatives completely failed to understand the implications, and the implications of what they are doing now on the long term, because they all fit together in a very straightforward pattern.

I am sure members will remember the glib comments we heard from the other side of how we avoided a recession. When we saw the U.S. housing market collapse, there was a belief from Mr. Magoo of finance that Canada would not be in any way impacted by a downturn in the United States, even though that has never, ever happened—

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Timmins—James Bay just used some fairly unparliamentary language in the description of our finance minister. I ask that he retract that comment.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I had referred in the past to a Liberal leader as Mr. Magoo and the Conservatives laughed and supported it. It is not unparliamentary. We would not find it on any unparliamentary list of words. Mr. Magoo is obviously a cartoon character and so it is perfectly straightforward. However, if the hon. member is feeling a little touchy this morning, Madam Speaker, and I hope this is not coming off my time responding to him, I would say that I have used it as a symbol.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I had not heard the first comment. I do not believe that it is unparliamentary. I would ask the member to continue.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, speaking of comical, it is the glib response that we saw from the Conservatives when they saw the storm clouds coming, everyone saw this technical, this synchronized recession or whatever the words were that they used, they saw it coming for a long time. What did they do throughout that period? They stripped the fiscal capacity of the country to respond.

They were coming with one tax break after another, which were absolutely useless tax breaks in terms of GST, stripping the country's capacity to be ready at a time of crisis. But that speaks very much to the typical attitude of the neo-conservatives, the attitude of what we saw in the United States, and what we saw in Europe. They created this situation that we are in now.

We are dealing now with the government's response. It is supposed to be 500 pages of economic stimulus. However, the government in November told us that we had missed the recession and the recession was past, then Conservative backbenchers said they had already done their economic stimulus the year before. That was their tax cuts and in fact they were so smart they were ahead of the economic stimulus package. Then, of course, we found out that 130,000 jobs were lost in January and 250,000 since they were making such glib comments. Now they have settled down their tone somewhat.

However, within Bill C-10 we see the real direction of the Conservatives. They are not all that interested in an economic stimulus. They are looking to create the old Reform Party pinata. If we smash this like a pinata, we will find all the ugly little slugs of the Reform ideology start to fall out, for example, their attack on the human rights code. It is right there. What does it have to do with budget implementation? Zero, but the attack on the human rights code is laid out. The attack on environmental protection, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, is in there. What does that have to do with economic stimulus? Zero.

The attack on student loans is absolutely appalling. We have student debt that is crushing middle class families across Canada and yet we see the government adding brass knuckles in its budget implementation bill to attack students who are suffering from student loans. What does that have to do with economic stimulus? Absolutely zero.

Government Orders

Then of course we see the move to strip Canada's foreign investment rules. What does that have to do with economic stimulus? A great deal, if one is a foreign corporate raider and dealing with a Canadian company that is on weak legs, the government has just made it easier.

Let us put all of this in the context of the times. Right now we have the situation of Xstrata in Sudbury, an absolute debacle in the community. It has hit the region like an economic neutron bomb, but it is not just an isolated plant closing. This is the result of the twin pillars of Conservative ideology, which are indifference and incompetence, in addressing the economy.

Let us back up two years to the former industry minister. Some day it will be a Trivial Pursuit question to ask: who was the minister at the time when we lost the two great mining giants of Canada overnight?

I am sure many of the listeners back home will be wondering. I will give two clues: Julie Couillard, the whole "Mom" Boucher thing. That famous member. He was the industry minister. At that time Falconbridge and Inco were attempting to get a merger so that we could make the synergies of the industrial basin of Sudbury actually come together. Inco was having problems with its regulatory approvals and the industry committee, not just the New Democrats but the industry committee said, "Hold off on the hostile takeover by the corporate raider Xstrata until we can ensure that at least there is another bid on the table". It was not to say, force Falconbridge to marry Inco, but to give Canadian companies the chance because they were being held up by international regulatory approvals.

The minister did nothing because it was not the role of the Conservatives to be involved in the economy in any way unless it was to sell off the great assets of Canada. Therefore, overnight we lost the twin jewels of Canadian money. Falconbridge went to Xstrata and Inco went to Vale of Brazil. We lost the synergies in the Sudbury basin.

At the time there were guffaws from the government side because it was the good times. In good times any idiotic company can make money. That is not a problem. In good times no one is worried about who is paying the bills but the question we asked again and again is what happens when the bust comes? What happens when the bust comes because nickel mining is cyclical? Now the bust has come. The only thing that the people of Sudbury had to protect them was an assurance by the government that a contract had been written to say that Xstrata would agree, in exchange for taking one of the key assets of the Canadian mining industry, that there would be three years without layoffs.

• (1230)

We have not even reached the three years. Now we have heard the industry minister claim, "Oh, don't worry, I stepped up to the floor and got Xstrata to offer some new money". That is a lark. That money was on the books from Xstrata because it is simply moving ahead with what it planned all along.

If anyone knows nickel mining in Sudbury they will say at \$5 a pound, nickel can be mined profitably. Nickel is about \$5 a pound. What Xstrata is doing, as part of its corporate plan along, is to move away from the lower grade deposits, move to the nickel rim mine

which is a phenomenally rich mine, which will allow it to continue to high grade the assets. Officials knew that if they simply ignored the agreement that they had a toothless, indifferent and incompetent government on the other side of the floor that would do nothing to make them stand up to the signed agreement with the Canadian people. That is exactly what happened.

For the people of Sudbury and all of the northern Ontario economy, the loss of 700 jobs is going to have an impact with long-term implications because anyone who has less than eight years seniority is gone. So sure they will be getting the bus ticket to Fort McMurray, but we are losing the new generation of miners. We are seeing families who do not have this extra six months. Whatever payout they get they are going to have to spend it and lose it before they ever get employment insurance.

In the 500 pages and all the talk we have heard from the Conservative Party, there is not a single provision anywhere in the budget for one extra family in Canada to be allowed access to employment insurance. Nothing. That has profound implications because Canadians pay into these systems. They believe, because they are working, that they do not have to worry about it, that if things go wrong that their government has a system in place.

The surprising fact for the people of Sudbury, Abitibi, and for the people all across my region, is that they have come to realize that the government has complete indifference toward those who are falling through the cracks. The only model applied for employment insurance is the Minister of Human Resources saying that the government did not want the benefits to be lucrative because it wanted to ensure that a hungry belly would ensure that people would get up off the couch and went looking for a job. That is absolutely intolerable.

It is intolerable that we have an indifferent government that has allowed such key resources, such as Falconbridge deposits, to be so cavalierly wasted. It is appalling that we have a government that will not make this foreign corporate raider stand up to the commitments that it made to the Canadian people when it acquired Falconbridge in the first place.

• (1235)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Timmins—James Bay for bringing up the subject of Xstrata because a lot of people who have been laid off not only live in Sudbury but they also live in Nickel Belt. I would like the hon. member's thoughts on the fact that the industry minister this week stood in the House and, I cannot say the word "lied", misled the House of Commons into believing that he was involved in the strategy—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. Hon. members must be careful about the language. It is not acceptable to use words like "misled the House".

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The industry minister tried to make us believe that he was involved in negotiations with Xstrata to put new money on the table, when all along this was old money dating back to 2008. I would like the member's thoughts on the industry minister misleading us.

Government Orders

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, we have been fighting this issue so strongly. The issue is really clear. This is a government that through its indifference and incompetence has allowed Falconbridge to be taken off by this corporate raider. At the time we were told not to worry because we have protection for three years, but Xstrata knew that the government did not really care and would not actually stand up for the people of Sudbury because it has not stood up for any other industry in this country.

When our new industry minister stands in the House and says “Listen, I’m taking this seriously”, I am glad he is actually standing up. He seems to have a little bit more backbone than some of his predecessors. But when he is saying there is new money, it is simply not true. Xstrata had money on the books for developing nickel rim because it is a fantastically rich mine and everyone knows it, and it wanted that deposit. It did not want to have to deal with the larger issues of the Sudbury basin and that is again the misuse of our resources, the misuse of commitments that were made to the Canadian people, and the misuse of information in the House of Commons. The government has to at least say, “We had no intention of holding them to any agreement in the first place”. That is a fundamental of Conservative ideology.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay for his intervention. One of the things he pointed out was the record of the government, not just in this budget but in previous budgets, saying that it is going to do one thing and ending up doing another.

My question is specifically on how it has treated those who are most vulnerable, those who are right now suffering job losses, particularly in his area but also right across this country. Does the member believe that this budget can really actually help people who need the help right now? Are the changes that are contemplated in this budget going to make matters worse in the long run or better?

• (1240)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, every day my office deals with the front lines of this economic crisis. We hear from the families who are not eligible for EI, who do not have enough weeks for EI, and the older workers who do not have enough funds to bridge them to a pension and end up losing everything along the way.

When we met with bankers, the business communities and labour, we found a surprising unanimity on one issue, which is that we have to allow greater latitude for EI in a time of economic crisis. We have to poverty-proof our communities.

We heard that from all kinds of sectors. Obviously, the Conservatives did not hear it because they continually go back to their basic Reform Party message. They do not want lucrative benefits because they think people are lazy. They want to accuse anyone who comes forward, who says anything about the issues of older workers, that we are not being positive enough. They want this whole Horatio Alger claptrap to be danced out in this House of Commons, and that we should encourage people to be more positive to find jobs that do not exist.

It is simply not acceptable. Families are losing their homes, they are losing their savings, and they are looking to the government to do more. What they see on the government side benches is absolute indifference.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak today to Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, and make some comments about the current situation of the government.

The government has introduced a budget that contains a lot of the stimulus package and ideas that were promoted by the opposition. However, at the end of the day, we have no confidence that this budget will ever see the light of day in terms of implementation. Budgets get passed all the time but governments will underspend budgets. One member was heard to say recently that we are confident that the recession will end, that we will start coming out of the recession within three months and that we will not need to spend a lot of this money.

That is why, fundamentally, we cannot trust or believe the government. It is a Jekyll and Hyde sort of government. The sweater comes on during the election campaign and then, of course, it comes off. Now, I think it is back on again. Some of the members, such as the President of the Treasury Board, have not figured out yet that it is sweater time again. I want to take a few minutes to explain what I mean by that.

In my riding in Winnipeg, we have a serious situation where a freeway and two bridges will be closed for a year and a half, inconveniencing about 200,000 people. For whatever reason, the mayor has decided to punish that quadrant of the city by refusing to stop the closure by allowing two extra lanes to be built. These two extra lanes are envisioned to be built by the city in the next 20 years anyway. In fact, they have been costed out at around \$50 million. This has been an issue for almost a year now. When I spoke to the President of the Treasury Board about this, he was really surprised. Given all the publicity on this issue, he felt that the problem could be solved if he could just get the parties together and do a cost-share on the extra two lanes, split into thirds. The federal share might then only be \$17 million. He agreed that he would try to get the parties together to do that.

That was back in the early part of November. I have followed up with him since and he told me that he had talked to them but new infrastructure money could not be applied to an existing project. Any project that was on the city of Winnipeg list would be excluded because it was already being dealt with. The issue then became how we would consider this project. I suggested to him that it would be a separate project. The first project had already been approved and it was a triple P, a totally different concept. This should be conventionally financed and they should find a way to do it under infrastructure money. We all remember the shovel-ready talk that this should be done because the city already owns the land.

Government Orders

I have had occasion to speak to the minister a couple of times over the last couple of weeks. On the first occasion, he said that I had better vote for the budget because there would be consequences if I did not. I just attributed that to him having a bad hair day and I let it slide. About a week later, I had another conversation with him. I asked him the same question and he repeated the same thing. He said that I should vote for the budget or there would be consequences. He kept referring to consequences. I do not think that is a good approach. He is out of sync with the Prime Minister because the Prime Minister is back to the sweaters. This minister should get on side and be a little warmer and friendlier.

In the Manitoba provincial legislature, I sat beside the highways minister. This is nothing new. It has been going on forever, regardless of the party that is in power. Conservative and opposition members, who sometimes ask very good, tough questions of the government, would come up after question period and talk to the highways minister, who was sitting right beside me, and ask about the bridges and roads that needed rebuilding in their areas. We need to be able to separate these things. We did not get all excited because the guy had voted against the budget. Of course he had. He was a Conservative in opposition and that was his role. He was supposed to be voting against the budget. He was doing his job by opposing the government and pointing out things the government should be doing.

● (1245)

However, we never held it against the member because he voted against the budget by not giving him his road. What kind of nonsense is that?

Let us flip it back. When we were in opposition, the same thing applied. We would ask the Conservative minister of highways a tough question about something to do with roads and a few minutes later we would cross the floor, have a chat with him and he would give us the answers. That is just the way things operate.

All I have tried to do is to get these parties together. However, we have a stubborn mayor who refuses to listen to over 5,000 people have responded to my surveys. It is not as if there are people opposed to this. Ninety-seven percent of the people are in favour of providing the two extra lanes.

Do members know that last June the Prime Minister announced \$70 million, which is a third of the money, would go toward a bridge in Saskatoon? That bridge in Saskatoon carries only 21,000 cars a day. Our Winnipeg bridge, which is 50 years old and falling apart, carries twice as many. It carries 40,000 cars a day and the mayor says, no, that the city will wait the 20 years to add the extra two lanes and the 200,000 people up in that quadrant can just suffer.

I want to make it very clear that it is not the minister's fault that this has happened. I do applaud him for trying to take a leadership role in this, but he should follow through. He should try to convince the mayor that there is money available for these extra two lanes, that if he will put in his third, which he seemed very agreeable to do in the beginning, then we could continue this project and get it done. However, he seems to now have double-shifted back and is saying that it is all contingent upon how we voted for the budget, which is just not the way to do it.

The Conservatives have a new-found alliance with the Liberals but they have to be pretty confident that will last. As the leader keeps moving up in the polls, the Liberals may not pass that big report card the Conservatives need to answer to in a few months.

One would think the Conservatives would get those sweaters back on and be a little extra friendly with all the members over here in the opposition because, guess what, they might need our help some day.

In any event, I would once again appeal to the minister to find a way to get the infrastructure money out to deal with this issue that we are talking about in Manitoba.

We talked yesterday to the municipal people who told us that the infrastructure money was really not there for bridges anyway. They said that it was for shovel-ready projects that had to be finished within two years. They have a list of projects that might apply and those are basically renovations. If a community centre needs a little bit of renovating and it can be done in two years without any environmental assessment, then that is the project that will be funded.

Why, in this omnibus bill, is there a provision dealing with environmental assessments? Just what kind of environmental projects do the Conservatives think will qualify under their rules for the infrastructure money? The answer is, none. There are no environmental projects that will apply here because they will not be able to get their assessment done in time to get the project done in the two year allotment.

Once again, I made the argument about the two lanes. I said that because we already had the land, we probably would not need an assessment because it was already in the plans. I said that this project should be considered as a separate one-off project to avoid people suffering an inconvenience. It is not only me who will be inconvenienced. The member has a colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul who is also in the affected area. Conservative councillors in the area are all in favour. Every elected official, at all levels, is interested in solving this problem. It is simply the mayor of Winnipeg who is the intransigent one in this particular project.

● (1250)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like my colleague to comment a little further with regard to employment insurance and the changes in the budget that the Liberals are supporting.

I understand, from what I have read in the budget, that there will be five additional weeks of benefits afforded to people who are entitled to them. However, it does not deal with the two weeks prior, which means that if they cannot get the first two weeks, they wait about 28 days before they get their first cheque.

I was just wondering what impact my colleague feels the changes to EI will have and whether he feels these are as lucrative as the Minister of Human Resources feels they are. I had applied way back when for EI when I was a young teenager and I did not feel that what I was making was lucrative.

Government Orders

In 1996, people used to make \$647 a week and now it is down to a maximum of four hundred and some dollars, but on average people only collect about \$355 a week. Does my colleague feel that this is lucrative or that it benefits the people who have lost their job? What is the impact on his community?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, we know that perhaps 65% of unemployed people are ineligible for EI benefits under the current system. We are not helping matters by not making changes. Given the conditions that this country is under at the moment, we definitely should eliminate the waiting period for EI because that would be the proper thing to do.

All the government has done is add an extra five weeks on at the end. The pain is up front. I would expect that we would keep pushing the government to see the light in this case and do something. We only need to look at the unemployment stats just in the last month and in the last quarter to see the huge increase in unemployment numbers. The signs point to matters only getting worse, not better, in the short term.

I know the Tories are holding on, hoping that we will come out of the recession so they will not have to spend any of this money. They want to be able to go back to their Reform Party cousins and say that they did it because they had to in order to save the government, but that they did not really have any intention of spending the money. They want to hold on long enough so that the economy will begin to come out of the recession.

However, it does not look like that will happen. Things are starting to look like they will be even worse. If those people in that party are aghast at the deficit they see the government looking at running right now, they will need to take another look at what could happen in another six months to a year from now when conditions might be far worse. We would hope that the government will take a look at this EI situation now and make the changes now before conditions get even worse than they are.

• (1255)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like the hon. member from Winnipeg to enlighten me on how the non-monetary measures that have been added into this budget, which is supported by the Liberals, will help stimulate the economy.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, I am quite familiar with the Tories in Manitoba doing the same thing. They also brought in big omnibus bills with poison pills in them.

When we were in opposition for the 11 years under the Filmon government, we had to deal with one of these bills every year. They were about 400 pages long and we would send our staff in to read it over and reread it to find these hidden poison pills. There were all kinds of them, which made it very difficult for us at times to vote against the bill because the government always put something in there that would be hard for us to vote against. That was just tactics on its part but that is what the government is all about, tactics.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for standing up in opposition in a constructive and critical way. It is important for us as members of Parliament to understand our role, and our role is to be critical when necessary. We are not always critical. We have been constructive in

our criticism and have put ideas forward. It is important to make that statement to begin with.

Before I get into the substance of my comments on the budget bill, I want to take a moment to pass on condolences from the Ottawa community and my caucus to the family of Madame Michèle Demers on her sudden and tragic death. Madame Demers was the president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada. She was a leader not only of her union and for the people she worked for, but also for the Ottawa community. We are saddened today for her family and quite frankly for the labour movement. I had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Demers on many occasions. She was always clear in her convictions about what she was doing and served her members well. We will all miss her greatly.

If we look at the trajectory of the budget, we have to look at the fiscal update, of course. Three components in the fiscal update were obviously not satisfactory to all members of Parliament, save the government. Included in the fiscal update was the well-known political financing issue. My colleague spoke of poison pills. The political financing issue was a large dose of poison.

However, that was not the focus for us in the NDP. We focused on the fact that the government wanted to ban the right to strike by public servants the day after it had just negotiated a contract with one of the public service unions.

In both the economic statement and Bill C-10 the government wants to take away the right of women to have pay equity. It also wants to take away the right to challenge if they do not receive equal pay for work of equal value.

In the fiscal update there was also a \$10 billion assumption. It was a whopper. It was that the government was going to find savings in government operations by selling off enough assets to gain \$10 billion.

In his own comments, the finance minister admitted that his numbers were a bit rosy. We will have to give him the new nickname of "Rosy". Actually, I think "Rosy" is being polite.

Every single economist who looked at that \$10 billion assumption, and this is especially for our friends who used to be reformers, thought it had no credibility. The finance minister was also criticized by the government's own parliamentary budget officer. The Conservative government pretends that it knows how to manage a lemonade stand, but it has a \$10 billion assumption that was laughed at from every corner.

The government grabbed onto power and prorogued the House. Then it did a Hail Mary pass, which is the budget. The Hail Mary pass is sadly being caught by the official opposition, as those members like to call themselves.

The rosy \$10 billion number from our rosy Minister of Finance came back in the budget in front of us as \$8.7 billion. The government has managed to figure out some of the math. However, the government forgot to tell us where the money is going to come from.

Government Orders

This year in the budget—and I say this to all those who purport to be fiscal conservatives, be they in the official opposition or be they on the government benches—the government is going to get \$4 billion from the sale of government assets and from finding government savings.

●(1300)

We all know what the game is. The game is that the Conservatives are going to have to do one of three things: increase the deficit, not spend the stimulus or have a fire sale of government assets in a buyer's market. Does anyone find that credible? I certainly do not. That is what bothers me most about this budget.

My colleagues have underlined the importance of looking at what this does for people, and I applaud that. It does not do much for people. What gets me more than anything are the assumptions made and the rhetoric put forward by a government that pretends it actually knows what it is doing when it comes to managing the nation's finances.

I will give another example. A couple of years ago the government said, and I go back to its assumptions in this budget, that it was going to find \$2 billion through savings in government operations and through selling off assets. It was going to find \$2 billion that was booked by the previous government, I might add, in government operations.

What it did was a real whopper. It hired a consulting company by the name of A.T. Kearney out of Chicago. The company has a branch office in Toronto. The consultant racked up a bill, and I know my friends know this one well, of not \$1 million, not \$2 million, not \$10 million, not \$15 million, not \$20 million, but \$24 million. Does anyone know what the government got for it? It got zero.

Public works had the blessing of the cabinet. The former minister of foreign affairs is nodding and smiling. He knows it well. The government got shaken down for \$24 million by A.T. Kearney. The problem is that we were shaken down.

One member looks as if he does not know what this is about. He should look it up. I am going to send it to him, actually, because he is a minister now in cabinet. He is walking away now, and he should. He is hanging his head in shame, I hope. A sum of \$24 million was spent, and we received zero value for the money.

These are the people who are now responsible for bringing us out of the recession. God help us all. What we need right now are people who understand how finances work. That is why I will not only be opposing this budget, but doing so vigorously and with clarity.

The government wants us to believe it has the best interests of the country in mind. When a government signs on for a \$24 million contract with a consulting company from Chicago and gets zero value for the money, I am sorry, but I do not trust it, my constituents do not trust it and neither should anyone in the House, including its own members.

In the time I have remaining, I want to talk about some solutions.

It is interesting to note that south of the border there is an entirely different situation. There are people who actually listen to those who want to pull us out of the recession by investing in people and

communities. One of the most exciting things happening south of the border is the green collar momentum. It is a move toward taking us from this economic recession and transforming our economy to one that is not only environmentally sound but also sustainable.

One of the alliances is different from the alliance we see in the House. It is called the Blue Green Alliance, an alliance in which labour and those pushing for environmental change have come together. They have said they need to come together to provide stimuli and solutions for the economy. We see this being applauded, lauded and supported by the federal government in the states.

My final comment is that instead of paying \$24 million for bogus reports, we should be investing in blue-green alliance solutions similar to those we see south of the border. That is what this party will be doing, it is what we will be advancing and it is why we will not be supporting this budget.

●(1305)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a gaping hole in this budget, and a lot of money is missing. The Conservatives are going to have to sell off some public assets to meet their target.

I would like the hon. member for Ottawa Centre to comment. The CBC is being talked about as one of the things the Conservatives are going to sell. I would like the hon. member to tell me what effect selling off public assets is going to have on Canadian culture.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, that is why I was stating in my comments on the budget that every Canadian should be concerned. The government has an \$8.7 billion hole in its assumptions in the budget. It was \$10.1 billion before; now it is \$8.7 billion.

My concern, and many of my colleagues share it, as should the official opposition, is that things like the CBC are in danger right now, because the budget document itself says that the government will be reviewing public sector assets that are in competition with the private sector. I am sorry, but that is where CBC is.

We also look at assets such as AECL, which needs some money. I am afraid the Conservatives will pump in taxpayers' dollars, turn around and sell it to their friends, and leave us holding the bill for it all.

This should be of concern. The government does not care. It wants to use the assets to make its books look better. It already did that in the last Parliament, when it sold off a bunch of buildings so that we could rent them back.

I implore my friends from the Liberal Party to actually understand what the Conservatives are doing. When we are aware of what they are doing, it demands action. No one will believe them when they say they did not know that was going to happen. They are fully aware of what is wrong with the budget. I ask the Liberals to wake up and oppose the budget.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on the question of the kind of carnal huckster attitude that the government has toward government assets.

Government Orders

In the last sale, public buildings were sold on the fact that the government sells off prime real estate all across Canada and then makes the taxpayer rent it back and pay for all improvements. It is not the owners. They get off scot-free.

In 25 years the taxpayer has to buy the building back at full market value. I do not know any real estate from the early eighties that is worth zero now, but this is the argument the government uses: at the end of 25 years, this prime real estate is supposed to somehow be valued at zero, so we are getting value for our dollar.

Could the hon. member, who knows this file so well, explain to the people back home about the real estate scam being perpetrated in the selloff of these assets? It is putting the taxpayer on the hook for all improvements and then making the taxpayer buy the building back at the end of the day.

• (1310)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for the question, because this is extremely important.

Right now, as we speak, the federal government is looking around this region for extra office space. It is projecting ahead. It is a good idea to plan ahead—very smart.

At the same time, it is looking to sell off assets. It has already done this little ruse when it sold off government buildings, buildings that we need, meaning that taxpayers have to lease the assets and have to pay. The simplest way to put this is to ask whether we would rather own or rent. What the government is doing, has done and is contemplating doing right now is similar to selling off our homes and then having to rent them back. It looks good in the short run because we have some money in our pockets. In the long run, it makes no sense at all.

The problem with the government is that it only looks at the short term to gain advantage. In this case it means putting an asset on the books to make things look good. In five or ten years, unless we do away with government entirely and no longer need buildings anyway, which is maybe the real plan, we need to have a place for our public service to work. I would rather have a government asset that we own than one that we have to sell and then rent back. It makes no sense. It is not good economics. It is not good management.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. Seeing no other speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The vote stands deferred until 3:00 p.m.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been consultations and I believe that if you were to seek it, there would be unanimous consent for the division on Bill C-10 to be the first division put to the House at 3 o'clock.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CANADA NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed from February 6, 2009 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act respecting not-for-profit corporations and certain other corporations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Madam Speaker, for several years, a number of representatives of not-for-profit corporations have been pressing to have the Canada Corporations Act modernized. In the past decade, numerous people have taken part in consultations, while others have made written submissions to Industry Canada calling for amendments to the Canada Corporations Act.

Since 2002, both Liberal and Conservative governments have tried introducing various bills, but they all died on the order paper. In spite of everything, it is quite clear that there is a common desire on both sides of the House to modernize the Canada Corporations Act, especially since the bills introduced by previous governments have all been very similar.

To briefly summarize Bill C-4, its primary aim is to propose new legislation on not-for-profit corporations that would establish a more modern and transparent framework for such organizations. The operational framework for not-for-profit corporations would be similar to corporate governance under the Canada Business Corporations Act. The new act would gradually repeal the Canada Corporations Act and would replace parts II, III and IV of that act. Although the bill is complex, the new framework that will govern not-for-profit corporations should considerably simplify and clarify the role of these corporations in our society, both for their members and directors and for the general public.

It is exceedingly clear that extensive changes must be made to the Canada Corporations Act. For that reason, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the principle underlying the bill. However, it is evident that some aspects of the bill must be examined in committee.

Government Orders

The Bloc Québécois supports this bill for a number of reasons. First of all, the process for establishing a not-for-profit will be considerably streamlined and much more transparent. The act currently requires not-for-profit corporations to keep detailed accounts of their activities but does not require disclosure of these accounts. Bill C-4 requires not-for-profits to make their financial records available to their members, directors and officers, as well as to the Director.

This will permit directors and officers to better manage and supervise the corporation, and allow members to monitor the financial situation of the organization between annual meetings and ensure that funds are used only in the pursuit of the stated goals and objectives.

With regard to efficiency, replacing the letters patent system, involving a sort of order signed by the minister, with an as of right system of incorporation makes it much easier to set up not-for-profit organizations. First, the discretionary approval process would disappear and the incorporation process would be simplified, giving corporations greater flexibility. This process would also be more efficient and less expensive, both for corporations and for the government.

Second, eliminating the obligation to have by-laws approved gives corporations the flexibility to create by-laws to meet their particular needs. It is high time the minister's discretionary authority in this area was abolished. This will increase not only the credibility of not-for-profit organizations, but public confidence in them.

I would also like to take this opportunity to point out the main issues the Bloc Québécois and many representatives of not-for-profit organizations have with Bill C-4. Currently, the Canada Corporations Act does not have a classification system for NPOs. Bill C-4 does not contain a mechanism to change that.

● (1315)

In the government's view, the new act does not need a classification system because the framework is permissive and flexible, allowing organizations to choose how to apply many provisions.

However, according to the national charities and not-for-profit law section of the Canadian Bar Association, not including a general classification system is a major flaw in this bill. It then becomes important to specify if the not-for-profit organization is charitable, mutualist, political or even religious, because they would be different. I am only trying to highlight various distinctions, but we believe that the committee should tackle this issue.

As well, section 154 of the Canada Corporations Act currently stipulates that the federal minister may grant a charter of incorporation if the corporation thereby created pursues objects "to which the legislative authority of the Parliament of Canada extends, of a national, patriotic, religious, philanthropic, charitable, scientific, artistic, social, professional or sporting character, or the like objects."

It seems that clause 4 of the new legislation would not require a not-for-profit organization to include in its statutes the objects it intends to pursue, thus sidestepping the whole notion of specifying what action an organization can take in accordance with its goals. Since we know that the federal Parliament has jurisdiction only over

organizations that do not have provincial goals, this raises the following question: Why does the bill not include some provision to oversee what falls under federal jurisdiction? The Bloc Québécois feels that this question should be studied in committee as well.

These are legitimate issues that the Bloc Québécois is trying to defend. Under section 92 of the Constitution, managing the social economy, volunteering and community activities falls within provincial jurisdiction. As set out in that section, all matters of a "merely local or private nature" fall under Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction.

It is important to note that the federal Parliament has jurisdiction only over those organizations not pursuing provincial objects. Subsection 92(11) of the Constitution Act, 1867, grants the "incorporation of companies with provincial objects" specifically to the provinces.

Accordingly, there seems to be a serious flaw in the bill and it must be carefully examined to avoid any potential conflict between the provinces and the federal government.

At the beginning of my speech, I said that, for some time now, representatives of not-for-profit corporations have been calling for amendments to bring the Canada Corporations Act up to date. For reasons of transparency, efficiency and fairness, the Bloc Québécois believes that these amendments are legitimate and essential. However, certain points need to be clarified in committee. Whether on matters of classification or the jurisdictions of each level of government, we believe that the committee must provide clear answers.

● (1320)

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, despite the clarity of my colleague's presentation, I would still like to ask a question.

With respect to developing regulations, the possibilities are wide-ranging, given that there really is no classification within not-for-profit organizations. Conflicts can arise concerning the goals of not-for-profit organizations because, as my colleague said earlier, there are corporations that are charitable and there are others that are mutualist.

Basically, the goal of charitable organizations is to provide services to people other than members and administrators, whereas mutualist organizations provide services directly to members. At some point there must be a regulation or a classification that would change how the act is applied in different situations. The Canadian Bar Association has also expressed its views, and it is important that this go back to committee so that it can be discussed.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this, since he sits on the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. How does he feel that we should proceed?

● (1325)

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Sherbrooke is absolutely correct. We feel that the issue of classification is a flaw in Bill C-4. And so we need to clarify this aspect of the bill. As my colleague mentioned, the Canadian Bar Association has raised this issue and sees it as a flaw.

Government Orders

The Bloc Québécois wants to debate the issue of classification and improve this part of the bill.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Madam Speaker, as you can see, I am enjoying this dialogue with my colleague through you.

I imagine that there have been a number of not-for-profit organizations in his riding with all kinds of situations at various points in time. The new legislation says that there can be a member on the board of directors, and other organizations can have several if they solicit funds.

I was once an accountant, and I sometimes encountered not-for-profit organizations that had one person in charge of absolutely everything, including solicitation and the investment of funds collected from donors.

I would say that, in some cases, it was relatively easy for organizations to get their certificates under the Canada Corporations Act. In many cases, they did not act in accordance with their stated objectives and sometimes even abused them. We have to consider the importance of protecting the public and the community in terms of assets because there are often tax breaks associated with that.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. In general, even if the bill seems to meet organizations' expectations and appears to have received unanimous support in nearly every respect, without regulations governing classification, how are unclassified organizations supposed to operate, and what will the minister's responsibilities be when giving these organizations a certificate?

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Madam Speaker, in a former life, I also worked with not-for-profit organizations, because for several years I was recreation director for the City of Chicoutimi. I can say that I saw many organizations where, as the member mentioned, one member had control over a corporation.

Bill C-4 is designed to modernize the legislation. The current legislation is out of date, and I believe there is a need for transparency in the operation of an organization and with regard to its membership. Organizations must also be accountable to the people when they solicit funds from them. There is also a need for transparency with regard to the people. I believe that Bill C-4 will be an improvement.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Madam Speaker, things come in threes, as the saying goes. I have seldom had occasion to address questions and comments to my colleague three times in a row. This third time proves that I enjoy talking to my colleague, through the Chair, of course.

It appears that at some point the committee will hold a lengthy period of consultations on this bill. Can my colleague tell us whether a series of consultations has already been planned? A number of round table discussions were held to draft this bill. Will the consultations take place in committee only, or will there be other consultations on Bill C-4?

• (1330)

Mr. Robert Bouchard: Madam Speaker, I must tell my colleague that I cannot answer that question. However, I believe it will be necessary to hold extensive consultations in order to understand the whole issue of not-for-profit corporations. I will take his question to

the committee and make sure that we hear a great many people, in order to get an overview of this issue.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-4. It is an important bill for a couple of reasons, but it really shows how the government has missed the mark, especially for the not-for-profit and charitable sector.

At a time when charitable donations have gone down, the government has reduced what people get back in terms of giving. It has not adjusted the formula properly. Over the last number of years a lower tax rate has been applied and it has reduced the charitable money we get back from the government. In not having fixed that, it has taken money away from charities and from individuals who give to charities. The government has decided to bring forward a bill that is basically a legalization of *Robert's Rules of Order* at a time when charities are struggling to get by. I am not going to accept that. I am not going to accept the bill in its current form. The government needs to be told to clean up its act and do something for charities that are struggling.

Right now there is an economic meltdown. Many groups and organizations are suffering and trying hard to get by but some are actually closing their doors. The government is going to pass on incredible legal costs and also the costs of a whole process to those organizations. It is important to recognize that this started back in 2000. I remember going to the voluntary sector initiative outreach that was done in 2000. That was eight years ago.

My background is in the not-for-profit sector. I worked as a job developer at Community Living Mississauga. I worked at the Association For Persons With Physical Disabilities. I worked at the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County. I have been a board director for the AIDS committee and board director for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. I have been at the table and I know how complicated it is and how we need to improve some of the processes.

Accountability is important and some elements in the bill do that to some degree, but it is not the only thing that is in the bill.

We were asking quite clearly for new regulations with regard to charitable giving. We asked that volunteers be rewarded for their time. This is done in the United States where there is a tax writeoff for volunteering of time. We asked for the ability to give money back to people, as the Victorian Order of Nurses does in that it gives receipts for gas and volunteer hours.

Government Orders

What do we get from the government? We get a process that is going to further cause pain and suffering in those organizations which have to deal with it right now. There is no plan or assistance. That is the problem. That is why I am saying now is not the time to do this. The government should be told to go back to the drawing board and come back with something that has balance, bring back something that is going to provide the charities and the not-for-profit organizations the capabilities to fulfill the requirements of the bill without having to draw from their programs. That is what will happen, because they will have to retrain board members and staff to implement new administrative processes.

The technological age that has come about has made things even more complicated, through emails and a whole series of other initiatives which are also going to have some rules around them. All of that will have a cost to the organizations through their management systems, their computer systems and their processes. Where is the money going to come from for that?

Is the government going to come down hard on those organizations that will not be able to do that right away? Is it going to go through an audit and target different organizations that do not have the same capability as the large ones? That is important to recognize because not all organizations operate in the same way. I can understand the impetus and support the principles of trying to bring some accountability forward, which is important, but the Lions Clubs, the legions and many others are going to be pretty shocked and wonder if they are going to have to follow the same process as the Toronto Port Authority. That is not right and should not be done without providing any type of supports.

The government has had alternatives in the House. I had a private member's bill that would review the whole way charitable donations are treated. What I proposed is similar to a political donation; when money is given, there is a generous return. I have asked for the same thing, and for the charities to be capped at a certain level so it does not cost an exponential amount of money. People could get their return and the charities could move forward. When people give to a political party in this country, for example, \$400, they get 75% of that back. If they give to the United Way, Scouts Canada, or the Victorian Order of Nurses they get a mere pittance back. I propose that we invert that so that those charities can have another revenue stream and ensure that the fiscal stimulus that happens in local communities goes to social organizations that are combatting the issues they are facing right now.

• (1335)

Some of the great organizations available to the public in my riding, such as the United Way, have to spend money from their reserves to support their current programs. They are going to be dealing with the consequences of a government that has put its head in the sand with regard to the economy for so many years and had this thrust upon them. The government has no plan. People are losing their homes. They have more social problems. They are experiencing greater stress in their lives. They will be turning to those organizations to get support. They will be turning to credit counselling. They will be turning to the Alzheimer's association to get assistance for their loved ones. They will be turning to all those groups to get the support they need.

Those groups will have to learn 170 pages of legislation and implement it at the time of greatest need in Canada. That is the wrong approach. The government should be told to go back to the drawing board and bring back some tools that would enable those agencies to deal with this change, put some money toward it and deal with the other issues that the voluntary sector initiative raised. Those elements were to strengthen those core organizations so that they would have the capability to plan for the future and expand their mandates in Canada in order to deal with new cases and problems in a fair way.

There are some elements in Bill C-4 that I do support. There are some good things, but they cannot be done alone. Once again, there were consultations in 2000, eight years ago. There were some talks and discussions by some groups back in 2002 and 2005. They were a more modest approach than the 2000 consultations which took place across Canada. However, those are years in the past and those consultations were done in a time that is totally different from today.

The government needs to start thinking about the organizations that are supporting the social economy. The social economy is significant in this country. Eight per cent of our GDP is tied to those groups and organizations that are helping people get by. They provide the services and programs that governments often turn their backs on because they do not want to fund them. People in our civil society decide that they are not going to put up with that and they form collective organizations to make a real social change, to make a difference. They fight back by creating an organization, choosing a board of directors and becoming incorporated. They start doing the charitable work that is so necessary for the people of their community, and in fact their country, because those organizations work together across many regions and provinces.

These organizations are going to have thrust upon them another cost, expense, process and procedure that is going to divert them from their necessary work. I think of some of the things that have happened just recently in my area. The Alzheimer Society just opened up a new facility in Windsor and Essex county. Sally Bennett Politidis is the chief executive officer. It is a great organization and has been able to open its doors and provide more respite care to assist a number of people who are not getting support from government programs. People are behind it. Lots of money has been donated.

The Alzheimer Society had a good campaign and has opened a beautiful new building that it is sustaining. Now, that organization is going to have to spend its time looking at a bill and deciding how it is going to change its operations to cope with this new set of rules when what it really needs is support from the government to sustain its operations. That is what should be happening.

Government Orders

There is absolutely nothing in the budget; the economic action plan, as it is referred to, did absolutely nothing for not-for-profit entities, not a single thing. Not only did it not support the traditional programs, such as child care, that we have been fighting for in Parliament, the government turned its back on every not-for-profit and charitable organization.

It has known about its actions and about clawing money back from Canadian taxpayers for the last number of years. The last number of budgets have reduced the bottom income for taxation. That is coupled with the rate of return one gets for charitable giving and that has shrunk over the years. It has gone in the reverse direction. I will concede that it is only a few dollars per person, but it is a symbolic gesture of a government that will not even address a simple issue and it turns its back on charities and other organizations. That is unacceptable.

• (1340)

Once again, I submitted a private member's bill. There have been other submissions, but my bill is about treating charitable donations similar to the way political donations are handled. I asked for unanimous consent for the bill to pass and it was denied. It would have been an important one that could have been effective.

When I put the bill forward last year, parliamentary research came back and said that it would cost around \$800 million to do it. I said we could phase it in over time, but at the time the government said that it was just too much money, that it could not afford \$800 million of taxpayer money.

Ironically, that money would have gone to local communities because it would have gone toward donations of individuals. It would have been a tax return for people, a tax investment back to the social programs that we support in our community. Those charities and organizations would be able to track new donors. The number of donors is dwindling in Canada because people cannot afford it as much any more.

The government said that it was too much money at that time. Look at what it is doing right now with the billions of dollars going out to the banks and so forth. They seem to get their share, but there is no money for individuals who give to charities. There is no money to reward people who give to Scouts Canada or to hospitals and universities. They count as well. There is no money for people to decide how they want to help advance civil society.

Instead the Conservatives have come back to Parliament with an old retread bill that has been tabled a couple of times in the House of Commons, a bill that was widely consulted on eight years ago. Society was much different eight years ago than it is now. Now the government is going to ram it down our throats.

This is what the government is going to do for the not-for-profit sector this year. It has not included them in the economic stimulus package. It will reduce the amount that individuals can get back at tax time. It is also going to give them new *Robert's Rules of Order* so boards of directors, staff and all administrative components will need to be reviewed and evaluated. In addition, the organizations will probably require some legal advice on that, for which the government will not provide assistance.

That is not right. These organizations, such as the Big Brothers Big Sisters in my riding, need to be concentrating on ensuring people can continue to volunteer and support them.

They have two fronts with which to deal. They have a front where people do not have enough money right now to donate, and donations are slipping. They also have to deal with the fact that volunteers are drying up as well, and that is important to recognize. The volunteer initiative needs focus. The not-for-profit organizations said at the time that they wanted to stimulate their volunteers and reward them.

There are all kinds of things we could do. The United States gives a tax credit for that. There are all kinds of opportunities to do something for those individuals. Let us face it. A lot of Canadians now need one or two jobs, or they go back to school, even if they work right now. They have less time to give to those organizations.

This needs to be adjusted. We need to focus on some type of legislation that will facilitate that type of encouragement. I cannot believe the government would come forward with this bill without including some of those other initiatives. It has denied the other requests that were made and has brought in a new set of *Robert's Rules of Order* for the not-for-profit organizations. They are on their own.

Enough is enough. If this makes it to committee and we end up spending time on this, we will have to bring all the not-for-profit organizations to the table. We need to hear from them. We need to know what is happening in their industry. We will need to know how they are getting by right now. We need to know how they will implement the legislation, while not affecting a single penny of the revenues going to their programs.

It would be a shame if the Conservatives, supported by whomever here, would implement a bill at a time when these charities need our support. If passed as is, the bill will take money out of programming, because not-for-profit organizations will have to do more administrative procedures. This needs to be addressed. There needs to be a plan behind it. I have not heard that plan. I have listened to the government on this and I have not heard anything from the comments of the Conservatives to deal with that situation.

I do not think anybody in the House wants to go back to their communities right now and see money taken away that could go to programs right now or to updating facilities to deal with the financial and other implications and the stresses with our current economy.

• (1345)

My area has had 10% unemployment for the last number of years. We just finished our United Way campaign and it had to pull from the reserves. That traditionally is not the situation. With the downturn in the automotive sector and a number of different manufacturing sector losses over the years, we have lost great generosity from members, men and women, often in the CAW. Also our salaried employees give the most per capita in Canada.

Government Orders

However, we are having a problem now. The loss of those jobs has eliminated the donations, not only from the companies that used to donate, and some of which made large donations to the United Way, but also those individuals who used to be employed by them. That has dried up as well. The ones left are stuck with having to pull things together.

I congratulate the men and women of CAW Local 1973. Despite having their transmission plant close in 2010, they upped their donations and led the United Way. The men and women of the CAW came forward and gave more money than ever before, knowing they would lose their jobs.

They are not giving up on the charitable sector. Those individuals are saying that we have to more. What does the government do? Yes, it does more. It gives them a Robert's Rule of Order that will take away from those groups, and that is unacceptable. It could have put something in the budget. It could have attached something to the bill. Even if it did not want to put out cash or some type of stimulus for the agencies, it could have rewarded Canadians who give to charities. The government decided not to do that.

The government decided as well to not even reward the volunteer effort of Canadians, the thousands of hours that people give to charities, whether it be for the environment, for children, for seniors or for educational institutions, on all of those things it could have given some type of reward for individuals to show them that needed to get engaged in their communities and if they did, the government would reward them. It could have shown people that it recognized the fact that they needed to get more active in their communities.

That is what is happening in other parts of the world. There is a recognition that people need to come together stronger than before. The government could do some type of small initiative for that or at least throw a crumb, just do something. People are willing to continue to do these things, but they are under much greater stress. Once again, they are either working one or two jobs, or going back to school and retraining. All those things are happening right now.

I say no to Bill C-4. I want the government to go back to the drawing board and bring forward something that will be progressive and balanced for the charities and ensure that it will not cost any money for them. If the government is going to bring in something, it should at least acknowledge there is going to be a cost.

This side of the House recognizes that there is a responsibility on the government side to reward those Canadians who are giving their time or their money. Both are values that are important to recognize and they are values that strengthen our civil society. They help eliminate poverty, reduce crime, improve literacy and help people who are sick get better, whether one sits on the board of directors at a hospital, or on a board at a university or college or whether one is the person working the bingos at night. This is another industry that has been crushed because of the border issues. We have seen revenues dry up from that. People would go out and give their time, with late hours, just to ensure that a few dollars would come into the organizations.

We recognize there needs to be a partnership and the government needs to be there for them. Implementing a Robert's Rules of Order that will cost their administration time, money is irresponsible. They

are also probably going to have to deal with some of the computers and other systems they run and to do so without any support. We want to see something brought forward that will meet the needs of Canadians, not-for-profits organizations and their charities, not attack them at this time.

• (1350)

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member, and I know the House has a great deal of respect for the member, in particular for the subject matter on which he has spoken.

The Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and there is a great deal of respect for that secretariat as well, has brought in legislation on the Canada not-for-profit corporations act. From time to time, when we deal with the link between bureaucracy and the grassroots organizations in our communities, we are always cognizant of many of the points that the member has raised. I am quite taken when he says that volunteering represents the values that strengthen civil society.

This bill is going to committee. The member has already indicated that he has a private member's bill, and I know he has put a great deal of research into it. He has linked the bureaucratic regime and the capacity that is necessary for non-governmental organizations, NGOs, to meet the criteria embedded in this bill. Would he and his party be prepared to bring forward suggestions at committee that would alleviate the kind of stresses he has indicated, and I believe he is correct? The stress will be in excess of the capacity that non-governmental organizations in my riding already have. They are experiencing a huge amount of problems.

Would he be prepared to put forward suggestions to committee in order that the bill could come back and address some of the major concerns he has raised?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the member is right. There is an opportunity at committee to bring forth a number of different amendments. My concern is whether the government will have any interest to allow them. That is why I decided today to hold the line and send the Conservatives a message. We are extremely unhappy that they even initiated it without any thought or even a gesture of support for those organizations having to go through such a process. In fact, it will even be stressful for them to examine and analyze the bill to determine how their local organization will be affected and then to get a lobby going on the Hill to have a presentation to make changes.

I agree with the member. If this bill goes forward, I will propose a series of different amendments. This corner of the House will also demand extensive consultations with not-for-profit organizations to be inclusive of how they deal with the current climate.

Government Orders

However, my concern in general, even right now, is that as we move toward that process, it will be taxing on organizations. If this is passed, I need to ensure that my not-for-profit organizations get copies of the bill. I know they will have to go to their board members with it. If they are lucky enough to have a lawyer on their board, that member will have to examine it and get back to the board. They will have to focus on those things as opposed to what is important right now. Sometimes it is just outright survival. There are groups that are clinging on right now will not even have the opportunity to get involved in the lobbying. They will be too busy surviving and later on, they will have a surprise at the end of the day.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to hear from our member for Windsor West, and I fully endorse his comments on the bill. I, too, am very disturbed that the government did not choose to come forward with a much larger package.

Since becoming elected last October as a member of Parliament, I have had organization after organization approach me looking for assistance because of the bureaucracy and red tape the government has imposed on them. These organizations serve the disabled. One organization had been a charitable organization for 20 years, but it missed one filing deadline and had its charitable status taken away. We have organizations that serve the Latin American communities. These are groups of new Canadians that, instead of making a lot of money in Alberta like a many other people, are dedicating their time to volunteer organizations. They are being harassed by the red tape of CIDA because they missed one deadline. Organizations like Preserve Agricultural Land in Alberta was founded simply to tell people the value of preserving agricultural land and it was denied charitable status.

Would the member please address the bigger issue of how we deal with charitable status and enable people who help Canadians to raise funds?

• (1355)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, that is important to recognize and I thank my colleague for the question because it touches upon a subject that I did not have time to address.

The bill further complicates the grassroots organizations that are trying to get together to form a social movement for education, literacy, anti-poverty, and a whole series of different initiatives. It could be agriculture, the preservation of land, or the environment. A number of groups that will try to get together will have further complications to do so under this bill and that is an issue.

It is important to contrast what we are seeing from the government with regard to not-for-profit organizations and charities versus the business sector, the government's pal. We know from the national survey of not-for-profit and voluntary organizations that 48% of organizations said they had difficulty obtaining funding from other organizations, including government. There is no surprise there. Some 20% said this problem was serious. The same proportion of organizations said that they had difficulty obtaining funding from individuals, although only 13% said this problem was serious. Finally, 42% of organizations said they had difficulty earning revenue. We know that is the current environment right now.

We have a budget that is going to be passed that does not do anything at all for not-for-profit organizations, not a single thing. It does not increase the amount of money people will get back nor does it provide any type of new supports or structures. The evidence is out there and in members ridings people know that they are losing organizations. They know that a number of them are being taxed when they try to get people information or actual work. Turning our back on the community is wrong right now.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too had the opportunity to work in the not-for-profit and charity sector for a number of years. I want to commend the hon. member for his speech and for bringing forward several of these issues. Maybe he could speak to what he has been able to discover, in the legislation and sledgehammer of bureaucracy in the budget, when trying to recruit new board members. We know how difficult it is to find volunteers. I would ask the member to explain the impact on all of these not-for-profit organizations and charities.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, the question from my colleague is an important one right now.

Every not-for-profit organization spends a lot of time trying to recruit board members. Not-for-profit organizations need board members for a variety of reasons. They need people in accounting, they need lawyers, they need people who are connected to the community in different capacities to be able to raise funds. They need people who can deal with social policy. They want to make sure they have somebody who is going to be good with the people the organizations represent and being an advocate for their boards.

The organizations are now going to have to shift their vision to how they are going to educate their current board members under this 170-page document and how they are going to implement a strategy to shift it. It is going to require an extensive shift and a business operational plan. At the same time, they are going to have to recruit board members. It is going to be extremely confusing and more and more difficult to bring board members online, in my opinion, at this particular time because people are concerned with a lot of other issues right now.

It is actually a sledgehammer approach and one that is very much focused on the *Robert's Rules of Order* way of bringing that in. Our gift to charities this year is that they are getting more rules of order and more things to learn, and by the way, we are not going to help them with it. We are not going to provide them with new tax incentives. We are not going to reward their volunteers and we are not going to improve their facilities or provide some type of stimulus. We are going to let them do this on their own. I say, good luck.

Statements by Members

By the way, if they want to lobby us, they should come to Ottawa because back in the year 2000 we did some consultation, eight years ago, and that will be our justifiable reason that we can do it on the Hill as opposed to what we should be doing, which is hearing from Canadians and their communities on how their charities are dealing with the current economic problems and how their communities are going to deal with cutbacks to services and the increased capacity necessary to deal with the social problems around a failing economy. That is what the government should be focused on.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

OSHAWA

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand before the House today representing the great citizens of Oshawa. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to them for re-electing me for the third time this past fall.

The people of Oshawa have been hit hard by this downturn and need the stimulus in the budget to pass. I am extremely disappointed in the NDP, who have irresponsibly voted against the budget and its measures to assist those hardest hit in my community.

However, I am extremely proud to say that the citizens of Oshawa provide our city with a renewed spirit of optimism and strength during this difficult time. I am confident that the ingenuity, determination and character of Oshawa's best will ensure that Oshawa will emerge stronger than ever.

I would also like to take this opportunity to honour the memory of an outstanding Oshawa citizen, community leader, volunteer, and a dear friend, Kevin Campbell. We will miss Kevin, especially during these tough times.

I call upon younger community leaders, in Kevin's memory, to step forward and bring together the spirit, optimism and strength of our great city.

* * *

WORLD WINTER GAMES

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I want to honour our Canadian team of special Olympics athletes who are currently competing in the 2009 World Winter Games.

In particular, I want to recognize four amazing athletes: Justin Fong, Marc Theriault, Alexandra Magee and David Boudreau, all from my riding of Newton—North Delta. In fact, Justin Fong came in first in his alpine intermediate super G event which took place this past Tuesday.

I want all members of the House to join me in wishing our special athletes the best of luck in the final two days of competition.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL CHILD SOLDIER DAY

Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this International Child Soldier Day, it is estimated that there are 300,000 such soldiers in the world. These children are used as fighters, messengers, porters, cooks or often, if they are girls, as sexual slaves. Some of them are forcibly recruited or kidnapped. Others join up to escape poverty, mistreatment and discrimination.

Canada is a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Optional Protocol on Child Soldiers, which bans combatants under the age of 15.

Unfortunately, while this convention requires signatories to promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers, the Conservative government has not yet repatriated Omar Khadr, who was 15 years old at the time of his arrest.

On this International Child Soldier Day, it is imperative that Canada at last respect its international commitments.

* * *

[English]

LEGAL AID

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my concern over cutbacks to legal aid that are adversely affecting people in my communities, particularly women, children, and the most vulnerable.

Legal Services Society of B.C. has announced it will be closing its family law clinic and firing 38 staff as a result of a funding shortfall. This will further weaken a legal aid system already in crisis after it was cut back by 40% by the provincial Liberal government in 2002.

This became a national embarrassment last November when the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women released a report that highlighted the lack of government support for legal aid, particularly in B.C., which was severely impacting the ability of those living in poverty to access legal services. The UN report also condemned the cancellation by this Conservative government of the court challenges program.

While Canada was once a global leader in social justice and equality, the actions of Liberals and Conservatives, both provincially and federally, have severely tarnished—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

GUYANESE COMMUNITY

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Calgary Northeast we are blessed with incredible cultural diversity and strong community-minded organizations.

Today I want to officially congratulate the Guyana Canada Cultural Association of Calgary on the purchase of its new building in Calgary Northeast. Led by President Percy Mootoo and his dedicated team, the association gives back to the community through volunteer work, financial contributions to worthy causes, and bursaries for students pursuing higher learning. I congratulate Mr. Mootoo and the association for leading by example.

I also congratulate the Guyanese community in Calgary, throughout Canada, and around the world on the celebration of Guyana's upcoming 39th Republic Day on February 23rd. The history of our two countries, our multicultural diversity, and our friendly and ever-strengthening bilateral relations are all reasons to be proud of our relationship, to celebrate, and to be hopeful for an even brighter future.

* * *

JUSTICE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, and it is 150 years since he published his theory of evolution in the seminal book *The Origin of Species*, which has contributed so much to our understanding of the natural world and human behaviour.

Social scientists have used Darwin's theories to better understand the root causes of crime. It is one thing to understand those causes though and it is another to take action. In my community of Vancouver Quadra, people are deeply concerned with the recent crime wave being described as an all out gang war. Six gang shootings in one week and at least seven homicides since late January in greater Vancouver. This is unacceptable.

The Liberals are deeply concerned. The Conservatives, for political reasons, defeated their very own crime bills through prorogation and other procedural means.

I call for an evolution of Conservative priorities on crime. It is time the Conservatives put the public good above their own partisan gain.

* * *

• (1410)

FOOD FREEDOM DAY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank all the farmers in my riding and across Canada who work hard, day in and day out, to ensure Canadians enjoy the highest quality, most abundant food supply in the world.

I salute our growers and producers today because today is Food Freedom Day in Canada, the day when average Canadians have earned enough income to pay their grocery bill for the entire year. We thank our farmers for the risks they take and the great care they give to raise the food we are so blessed to receive on our tables.

Statements by Members

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge that too many Canadian families rely on food banks to enjoy the goodness of our bounty.

The weekend after next I will be participating in the annual Ancaster Community Food Drive in my riding and I urge all members of the House to also be mindful of those in need today and every day as we recognize our farmers for their great work.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC FILM INDUSTRY

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Speaker, Quebec films are the runaway favourites in the competition for the 29th Genie awards. This week, we have learned that Quebec practitioners of the cinematographic arts have alone captured 41 of the 71 nominations.

Despite this domination by the Quebec film industry, it has a dark cloud hanging over it. Producers and directors are worried. Director Charles Binamé, who brought us *Séraphin: heart of stone* and *American trap* says, "The word culture is not in the Conservatives' vocabulary...We sense that we are being punished by the federal government...This country has a heritage and culture minister who has never read a book in French and has never seen one of our films".

As for Denise Robert, producer of *Everything is fine* and *The barbarian invasions*, she adds. "Quebec is guilty of being too talented. We are being forced to cut the pie into smaller and smaller pieces".

It is imperative for this Conservative government to stop penalizing the artists of Quebec.

* * *

GENIE AWARDS

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the nominees for the 29th annual Genie Awards were announced Tuesday by the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television.

[English]

British Columbia films, such as Carl Bessai's *Normal*, are among the nominees, as are B.C. film professionals Janice Blackie-Goodine and Greg Middleton, who are among the many talented nominees.

[Translation]

The films *The Necessities of Life* and *Everything is Fine* dominated the selection. *Passchendaele*, *Fugitive Pieces*, *Amal* and *Mommy is at the Hairdresser's* each garnered six nominations.

[English]

The Genie Awards take place here in Ottawa April 4 at the Canadian Aviation Museum. Events featuring the Canadian film industry will occur in the days leading up to the awards.

As the member of Parliament for North Vancouver, home of much of Canada's film production industry, I wish to congratulate all the nominees.

*Statements by Members***OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES**

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the one year countdown to the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver. We look forward to joining Canadians from across our country as we cheer on our superb athletes and celebrate their achievements.

Although the B.C. government and the Olympic committee organizers are working very hard to make this international event a huge success, this Conservative government refuses to disclose how much it will spend on security for the games. The B.C. government needs this information now to complete its own budget and security preparations.

Is the federal government hiding from the Canadian people because the cost of security is now projected to be at least five times greater than previously estimated, or is it because the RCMP may not be able to provide extra staff, now that the government has torn up their wage agreement, further compromising their national manpower deficit in this, one of the finest police forces in the world?

The Conservative government must stop hiding and provide B.C. with the facts and resources to ensure we can have top notch games.

* * *

[*Translation*]

QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from the earliest days of the French colony, the inhabitants of New France traditionally got together to celebrate, shortly before Lent. That tradition remains alive and well to this day.

Quebec, the snow capital of the world, is once again celebrating the joys of winter this year with Bonhomme Carnaval. Many activities are planned, such as the magnificent night parade, which took place last Saturday. The Carnaval de Québec is now the largest winter carnival in the world and is ranked third among the top carnivals. Our Prime Minister attended once again this year.

I would like to commend the excellent work of the carnival's organizers and congratulate its president, Gisèle Bourdeau.

Best of luck to the sexiest man in Quebec, Bonhomme Carnaval.

* * *

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of my constituents, Mikhail Lennikov, his wife Iriana and his 17-year-old son, Dmitri, to urge the government to stay their deportation to Russia on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Mr. Lennikov was allowed into Canada with his family for a fresh start after he had voluntarily notified Canadian authorities that he was recruited 25 years ago by the KGB against his will. As if he had a choice in a totalitarian state.

The Lennikovs were recently ordered to leave Canada on the grounds that somehow he could constitute a security risk.

Mr. Lennikov's spotless record of 11 years in Canada demonstrate that he is not a threat. The case for his deportation simply cannot be based on fact or even contemplated for his 17-year-old son, Dmitri, who sees the deportation to a country that he hardly knows as "a final nail in the coffin".

The Lennikovs have been a credit to our community. I urge the Minister of Public Safety to stop the Lennikov deportation and allow this family to stay in Canada where they now so clearly belong.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Iran.

Reports yesterday that seven leaders of the Baha'i community, who had been detained without access to legal counsel, have now been charged is very troubling. Addressing the persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, such as the Baha'i in Iran, has been a consistent priority for Canada.

The adoption of the Canadian-led resolution on the human rights situation in Iran by the UN General Assembly in December again signalled the international community's ongoing concern. It calls on the Government of Iran to respect fully its human rights obligations.

Canada will continue to raise our concerns about the Baha'i and human rights more generally directly with the Government of Iran.

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[*Translation*]

MICHÈLE DEMERS

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were dismayed to learn yesterday of the sudden death of Ms. Michèle Demers, president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.

A social worker by training, she became politically active as a shop steward in 1982 while working at the veterans' hospital in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. In 2005, she became the 50th president of a union that represents 55,000 members. She was re-elected in December 2007.

Throughout her career, this union activist championed the right to collective bargaining, funding of the sciences for the public good—especially in connection with food safety and hazardous products, union-management consultation and dialogue and the renewal of the public service.

For all those involved in defending the rights of workers, Michèle Demers will remain a source of inspiration who set an exceptional standard.

Oral Questions

●(1415)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a new report has confirmed that the Prime Minister was not able to provide the money promised for infrastructure, calling into question the promises made in his new budget.

We have it on good authority that since the start of the new fiscal measures, Quebec's municipalities have not received any news or details about the Conservative government's infrastructure projects. The government is proposing to finance 50% of the work, leaving the rest of the bill to the provinces and municipalities, which have already approved their 2009 budgets.

What is more, even though the infamous Building Canada plan was implemented in September 2008, eligibility criteria have yet to be outlined. Canadian municipalities are still in the dark concerning this government's intentions. The government's attempts to shed light on the subject have been deplorable. Meetings between federal ministers and municipal authorities are being cancelled at the last minute without any explanation.

We must continue to hold this government accountable.

* * *

[English]

OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, February 12, 2009 marks the one year countdown to the official opening ceremonies of the 21st Olympic Winter Games.

In exactly one year, Canada will welcome the world. Canadians from every corner of our country will be able to participate in this once in a generation opportunity as we showcase our athletes, artists, culture and heritage.

Today, in Whistler, the Minister of State for Sport unveiled the made-in-Canada torch that will be carried across our country. Communities from coast to coast to coast will be able to welcome and celebrate this record-setting journey.

Olympians, like Jennifer Heil and Clara Hughes, are a few of our Olympic champions. Just last weekend our Canadian athletes won an amazing 28 medals, including 14 gold.

Among the exciting new signature venues is the Richmond Oval.

Thanks to the government's strong support for elite athlete development and increased investment in sports infrastructure, I am certain that the 2010 Canadian games will be a smashing success.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, President Obama visits Canada next week and Canadians want to know what the Prime Minister will be doing to defend vital

Canadian interests, such as jobs in the auto sector, for example. The government has been idling for months waiting for the U.S. assistance package.

Will the Prime Minister tell the president, as he should, that the U.S. auto rescue package must not suck jobs and product mandates out of our industry?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of dictating outcomes to the United States. It is a question of Canada coming to the table as a partner. We have indicated that we are willing to do that in collaboration, as the hon. member should know, with the Government of Ontario.

We have been working hand in glove with the American administration and with our Ontario counterparts for some time now to ensure that, as this industry is restructured, Canada maintains its vital part of the North American automobile industry.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me raise another matter, which is the U.S.-Canada border. It has become a choke chain on the Canadian economy. The tourist industry, the auto sector and communities next door to the American border have all suffered from the U.S. tightening of the border.

What specific measures will the Prime Minister propose to the president to loosen that chain? For example, will he ask the president to rethink the passport requirement due to be imposed in June?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I think the entire House knows that it was under the preceding government that the border was tightened and, in fact, that we lost our privileged relationship with the United States.

Under our government, some of the implementation of the matters that the hon. member speaks of have been delayed several times. We always indicate to our American friends that this government views the United States as our closest ally and partner, that we share not only a vibrant commercial relationship with it but also its security concerns, and that we are always willing to work as a partner.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third point I want to raise is this: President Obama's visit will give us a chance to unite in the fight against climate change. The government claims that its environmental standards are similar to those of the new American administration, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Is the Prime Minister ready to get on board with the U.S. government's initiatives, and is he ready to support stricter North American targets?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the climate change targets the opposition wants are completely unrealistic. Neither this government nor the U.S. government want unrealistic targets. It is critical that we talk about our objectives together. In addition to an integrated continental approach with an integrated economy, we must insist, in international talks, that all large countries adopt targets. That is this government's position and that of—

Le Président: The hon. member for Ottawa South.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are still waiting for a regulatory framework for the fight against climate change. The opposition rewrote the Clean Air Act, then the Conservatives let it drop. Eleven independent groups say that the Conservative plan is doomed to failure, and Canada is falling behind internationally.

In anticipation of President Obama's visit, how can we undertake climate change negotiations with the United States if we have nothing to bring to the table?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth, and I want to finish my previous answer.

[English]

It is important to understand that the targets the Obama administration is looking at in terms of climate change are very close to the targets of this government. They are certainly not the completely unrealistic targets of the opposition.

The position of the opposition parties that only some emitters should reduce their emissions and not all emitters is unacceptable to this government and I think it is also unacceptable to the government of the United States.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' climate change story has gone from made in Canada to delayed in Canada to made in the U.S.A. Canada is scrambling to catch up, lurching from ice floe to ice floe, without credibility and without a plan.

When President Obama says cap and trade, he means cap as in hard cap, not intensity-based targets. When he says trade, he means trading that is in line with the European Union and, of course, the United Nations.

Why does the minister not simply admit that he is making it up on the fly and that he is no position to cooperate with the United States

on climate change? Or, is he the Minister of the Environment in prime minister Obama's country?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the targets we have spoken of are very clear.

I would say that the hon. member opposite is making fairly extreme statements, both in the House and elsewhere, about this particular matter. He has referred to the ecoTrust funds, for example, including the ones that went to the Government of Ontario, as eco-fraud.

I would ask the member here in the House if he could share with the House any specific accusations of fraud that involve the Government of Ontario or any other provincial government?

* * *

[Translation]

CULTURE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Prizes for the Arts are turning into the blooper prizes, with the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages in the leading role. Yesterday, he had the audacity to say that the prizes were not even his project.

I would remind this House that in its latest budget, the government earmarked \$25 million for something that is allegedly not its project.

Does the Prime Minister realize that he has no option but to cancel this project, which has been universally condemned, and transfer the \$25 million to the cultural programs he cut?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc always opposes any initiative that strengthens Canada. This government has established world-class science and medicine prizes. We are doing the same thing for the arts.

There is a proposal in the budget. The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages is consulting the cultural community to clarify that proposal. The project will be good for Canada, despite the Bloc's opposition.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, during the vote on the budget, this House voted \$25 million in funding for an unknown project, and to boot, the government is cutting cultural programs without familiarizing itself with the analyses justifying these cuts. So much for sound management of public funds.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages shoulder his responsibilities and take his cue from Edgar Allan Poe, saying, "Nevermore, nevermore"?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only justifying here is being done by the Bloc leader, who is always trying to justify voting against initiatives that benefit the cultural community. This government is taking action and is going to create a world-class prize. This is important for this country. The Bloc may always vote against these things, but we are going to take action.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages has shown that he is incompetent because he was duped by two promoters who did not hesitate to lie and to invent backers to snatch \$25 million from the government for the Canada Prizes for the Arts and Creativity.

Rather than criticizing the opposition members who do not support his project and attempting to defend the indefensible, would it not be better for the minister to be working on re-establishing programs that will allow our artists to promote culture abroad?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will make investments this year, as we have in the past and will in the future, to promote our artists around the world. This year, we are investing \$21 million. Yes, there is \$25 million in the budget to create prizes for artists, to look after the cultural and artistic community in Canada. We want to create prizes, like those we have for doctors and scientists, to celebrate Canadian artists, even if the Bloc votes against it. The Bloc always votes against measures to support artists' needs. It votes against every bill that seeks to establish real prizes for Canada. That is shameful.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister abolished the former touring programs under the pretext that they were poorly administered. However, he refuses to make public the analyses to support his conclusion, as though his management of the Canada Prizes for the Arts and Creativity were exemplary.

Does the minister realize that he has achieved the impossible? He is even worse than his predecessor.

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking about the Canada Prize, here is what the *Globe and Mail* had to say about it. It said:

This is about giving a jolt of entrepreneurial energy to the arts, about putting young artists in a borderless world on centre stage, and with them, Canada, as a country that is open to the world culture, and cares about the arts and the artists. Artists should be thrilled. This is their moment.

Artists in this country are receiving more support from this government than from any government in Canadian history. We are proud to support our artists. All we ask from the opposition parties is that they wait and see the exact plan that we are going to put forward for arts and culture. It will be fantastic. When we do, hopefully we will hear no more comments from the Bloc.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the facts show that the Conservatives' economic policies are not working: we have the first trade deficit in 33 years; we saw a record number of job losses in January; there has been a 50% increase in personal bankruptcies; and job losses continue to mount, for instance, at AbitibiBowater in Grand Falls, Pratt & Whitney in Longueuil and Domtar in Ear Falls.

The Americans have a buy-domestic policy. Why does Canada not have such a policy, in order to create jobs here in Canada?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada does not want to see an increase in protectionism around the world. We honour our commitments and we expect the Americans to do the same. However, we have brought forward important initiatives for the economy, initiatives that are being well received by Canadians. We are in the process of passing the budget. Not only did the NDP oppose the budget before even reading it, but that party is trying to stall its passing. That is completely irresponsible.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this buy Canadian policy is not protectionist. It is, in fact, consistent with NAFTA. It is supported by business and labour, and it is in the Obama stimulus package that the government said it is pleased with.

But the government is going in the opposite direction than that budget adopted by the Americans. In fact Canadian companies have been shut out completely in bids for public works contracts. They have gone to the U.S.

If the Prime Minister believes that Canadian companies are the best in the world, why will he not at least let them bid on government contracts?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely a ridiculous accusation from the NDP. The fact of the matter is that our Canadian companies bid and every year they win between 80% and 90% of those contracts. We respect the rules. We expect the Americans to do the same.

Our government has a number of important economic measures before the House that require passage for the Canadian economy. The NDP decided it would be against them even before it heard about them. Now it is the only party in the House trying to delay passage of these economic measures. The NDP is once again behaving totally irresponsibly for the families of this country.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister raises the issue of the budget implementation bill, but it is filled with ideological add-ons, such as making it easier for companies to take over Canadian businesses. People should be concerned about this.

For example, the government has a legal agreement with Xstrata that says there are to be no layoffs for up to three years. Yet there are people in Sudbury, 700 of them, who have received pink slips now before the three years is up.

We have to ask ourselves, how can we trust a Prime Minister who will not even stand up for agreements that his government has signed on these issues?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget has measures to support Canadian communities. It invests in industries that are hard hit. It invests in strategic industries. It has measures to improve credit and financing for Canadian business. It has measures to help the unemployed and to retrain people. These are what is important for the Canadian economy and Canadian families, not the hon. member's pet undemocratic coalition that nobody voted for.

* * *

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Pratt & Whitney is laying off 1,000 employees, Bell Helicopter has sent 500 workers packing and Bombardier has slashed 710 jobs. All of this news, which is disastrous for the aerospace industry in Quebec, in less than one week.

Is the Minister of Industry still ready to say, as he did on Monday, that the aerospace industry is in good shape and does not need special federal financial aid?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, there are challenges in many Canadian sectors. Obviously the aerospace industry is one sector that is being affected by the global economic crisis.

However, we have already announced \$900 million for the aerospace industry through SADI. And Bombardier has announced 730 new permanent jobs in Montreal as well. The news is not all bad.

[English]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these people live in my riding. The minister has no right to insult their intelligence.

Over 2,000 people have lost their jobs in less than a week in the aerospace sector, and he tells them there is nothing he can do? This just will not do.

We have invested a lot to make our industry one of the best in the world. What is he going to do to guarantee that there will still be jobs once this crisis is over?

• (1435)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a great relationship with the aerospace industry. That is why we continue to support innovation in that sector through our program. That is why we continue to have, through our Canada first defence policy, continued buying in that sector that involves the Canadian sector.

The hon. member is totally incorrect. We support the sector, just as we support all sectors of the economy through a budget that works, through a budget that is helping create an economic stimulus, through an economic plan that is based upon innovation and new jobs and opportunity for the future.

The hon. member voted for the budget. I expect that she will be telling that to her constituents as well.

TRADE

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many Canadian firms cannot get U.S. government business because of American protectionist rules. Yet last year U.S. defence firms almost doubled their business with the Canadian government.

Having failed to stand up for Canada and secure ITAR exemptions from the Bush Republicans, the Conservatives' soulmates, what specific actions has the trade minister taken with the Obama Democrats to secure ITAR exemptions to protect Canadian aerospace and defence industry jobs now when they need it the most?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. friend could get up to speed on some of these issues, it would help us to move them forward.

I am not sure if he is aware that the Democrats actually have been in control of the U.S. house for some time. I have met previous chairs of the committees on that issue. I would be happy to send him information, which I do not know why he has not read, about the progress made on the ITAR issue relative to Canada. There has been great progress made. I would be happy to send him that information, if he will read it.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 30, Secretary Napolitano, in making ominous statements called for a comprehensive review of threats along our border to be completed next week. This has been followed by erroneous and pejorative op-eds in U.S. newspapers that attack Canadian interests. The government's response: silence.

In fact, in committee yesterday the minister confirmed he had only a brief unrelated conversation with the secretary and that he provided no submissions at all to the Obama administration or Congress. This could have a major impact on trade and tourism. Why is the government doing nothing?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, as I told the committee, I had a very constructive discussion with the homeland secretary and we discussed the importance of our common interests both in border security and in trade.

Obviously, the Government of Canada does not write the staff reports, but I do not agree with the characterization that my friend across the way has given to what she has sought. The homeland security secretary has asked for reports on a wide range of issues, including getting up to speed on the Canadian border. I think it is a very positive thing that she is showing that interest in Canada and in having good relations with us.

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first we had Bell Helicopter and Bombardier Aerospace, now we have Pratt & Whitney announcing several hundred layoffs. Yet the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada had forewarned the government and is still calling for the \$200 million that was promised during the election campaign by the Prime Minister but does not appear in the budget.

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that his budget is totally inadequate and that he has a duty to respond to the needs of the aerospace industry?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have already announced \$900 million for the aerospace industry through the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, or SADI, and the Canada First defence strategy. On the contrary, there is more support for Canadian businesses.

I can also say that there is good news from Bombardier: the creation of 730 new permanent jobs in the Montreal region. So there is good news as well.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, aerospace is to Quebec what the automotive sector is to Ontario. The budget does not meet the expectations of the aerospace industry, which is in urgent need of a true development policy, for instance, one that would provide refundable credits for R and D.

Does the Prime Minister understand that it is unacceptable for his government not to provide the aerospace industry with support equivalent to what it has provided to the auto industry?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will continue. Canada's economic action plan also increases our support to all industries, including the aerospace and aviation industry. We have also simplified the process for companies to access credit. The action plan has also extended the write-off for capital and equipment costs, and improved the accessibility of skills training.

We are taking action for Canada's economy and for Canada's future.

* * *

●(1440)

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an economist said, and I quote, "The role of the Prime Minister is to defend Canada's interests. And you have failed to do so. For instance, in the softwood lumber file, for over three years all opposition leaders have been calling for loan guarantees for our forestry companies."

What is the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) waiting for to take action on this?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague should know, things are very, very dangerous right now in the forestry industry. Given that the loan

Oral Questions

guarantees offered by Ontario and Quebec are at this time the subject of an arbitration procedure with the United States, it would be inappropriate to comment on the interpretation of those agreements.

I can say, however, that the agreement provides stability and certainty to the forestry industry, its workers and their communities throughout Canada.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the economist I quoted earlier was the current Prime Minister during the leaders' debate in 2006. To maintain that loan guarantees violate the agreement, as the minister insists, is false. The auto plan has them, EDC works on that basis and Investissement Québec is already giving loans to forestry companies.

Will the minister admit that the budget is clearly inadequate and that additional measures are needed, such as loan guarantees, to help the forestry industry?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question, but he does not seem to understand.

The loan guarantees extended by two provinces and the rulings have gone to arbitration with the United States. Some 80% of Canadian softwood lumber exports go to the United States. It is extremely important for us to preserve this agreement and ensure that our workers continue to export their lumber to our main economic partner, the United States.

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[English]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 40 well-known and respected cultural organizations were listed as partners for the Canada Prize for the Arts without their knowledge. These organizations have built their names and their credibility through many efforts over several years. Today, they find themselves associated with a concept which they did not even approve. The minister, instead of defending them, puts his head in the sand.

Is the minister trying to hide something or is he incompetent? Maybe he is trying to hide his incompetence.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is talking about one proposal about which I know there is debate, but that proposal is not our government's policy. When we come forward with the policy, my hon. colleague will be able to rise in the House and actually speak to it with a little bit more acuity. That having been said, the Canada Prize and the money to create a prize for arts and culture is in the budget and I am pleased that the member is going to be voting for it, in spite of his questions.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Monday, before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, the minister defended the Canada Prizes for the Arts and Creativity. Wednesday, we learned that the prizes were established under false pretences. Now, the minister is washing his hands of it all. On Monday he was announcing this \$25 million program, with which he was familiar. On Wednesday, he really was not sure about the program. On Monday, he was giving details about the program. On Wednesday, he was saying that the details might be different.

Is there anyone on the other side who can tell us what the program is all about?

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have said the exact same thing all the way through, which is that in this budget we will create prizes for Canadian artists, just like last year when we set aside \$20 million to create the Gairdner prizes for excellence in medicine and science.

We want to do that as well for arts and culture, which is what we are doing. We have set aside the money in the budget. There is one proposal out there that is getting debate. It is not our proposal. When we come forward with our specific plan, my hon. colleague will be able to see it, read it and take a position. When this comes forward, it will get the support of the arts and culture community in this country and it will be great for this country, which is why the Bloc Québécois is against it. I am sorry to see my hon. colleague is on its bandwagon now.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Defence.

We learned today that the Conservative government has no idea whether it is getting value for money from a military communications project. This project was supposed to cost \$105 million and has since ballooned to \$290 million, three times the original cost. The defence department audit flagged that sole source contract.

With such a mess, could the minister explain why he agreed to extend and expand this land command support system with General Dynamics?

• (1445)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the costs associated with this particular project and we are looking into how this has occurred.

As members would expect, these particular programs are reviewed and are under the auspices of the Auditor General, as are all contracts of this nature. We are looking into the details that the hon. member is seeking.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that we have heard of management problems at the Department of National Defence. The chief of review services

sounded the alarm. He has determined that supply projects worth \$9.6 billion are currently at risk. He even refers to 20 projects carried out by very underqualified lead suppliers. That is worrisome.

In this recession, does the minister really know what is happening in his department?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always necessary to be prudent with such programs. At the Department of National Defence, we have very competent and professional staff capable of looking after such programs.

[English]

We are constantly reviewing these programs, given the amount of money that is involved in the spending and the procurement of military hardware and military programs, especially at a time like this. I give my friend the assurance that we are looking into this.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the global economy remains in unprecedented turmoil. Our Conservative government has brought forward a multi-year economic action plan. It is a plan that will create and maintain jobs, help those Canadians hardest hit by the global economic downturn and make key investments to stimulate the economy.

However, for the plan to work, Parliament needs to act and pass the budget implementation bill without delay but the NDP has been trying to stall the bill's progress. Could the Minister of Finance please update the House as to what is at stake if the NDP continues—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation we face is serious. We are in the midst of a synchronized global recession, which is why we created Canada's economic action plan.

The first budget bill is before the House. Delay of the bill would, quite frankly, be irresponsible. What would be delayed? The following would be delayed: extending EI benefits by five weeks; \$6 billion in stimulative investments for hospitals, infrastructure, highways, roads and public projects across the country; and vital measures with respect to ensuring access to financing for people and businesses across the country.

We consulted with Canadians extensively before the budget—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservatives have trouble with numbers. In November, they made some forecasts that did not hold water, and they have taken advantage of them to try and save money at the expense of women.

Oral Questions

Can the government tell us how much money it is going to save by refusing to pay women equally for work of equal value? Or will it admit that no money will be saved and that it is simply opposed to pay equity?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I do not understand is how the member does not understand the cost to women for having to wait for 15 years to have a complaint resolved.

We brought forward a proactive system to ensure women would receive equity in the workforce on a timely basis. I am proud of our government's efforts in that respect.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was his leader, the Prime Minister of this country, who said back in 1998 that the federal government should scrap its ridiculous pay equity law. With Bill C-10, the government is doing exactly that. It is scrapping pay equity.

If the President of the Treasury Board wants to take a page from the Manitoba government, why does he not drop the fines against unions, allow the complaints procedure under the Canadian Human Rights Commission and appoint a pay equity bureau like Manitoba did to help women close the gap once and for all?

• (1450)

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe we should be closing that gap and 15 years is too long to wait. Each of us in the economy, whether it is a union or an employer, has a positive obligation to ensure that women receive equity in the workforce. That is what we are about and that is what we are doing in this legislation, which is why we hope this House and that member will support this very important legislation.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite endless urging from the opposition parties and members of all sectors of civil society, the Conservative government is still stubbornly refusing to repatriate young Omar Khadr to Canada. Worse yet, the Prime Minister refuses to even raise the matter with President Obama when he visits, according to one of his spokespersons. We are talking here of a child soldier, imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay for more than six years now and subjected to acts of torture.

Does the Prime Minister understand that he has a moral duty to discuss with President Obama the arrangements for repatriating this young Canadian citizen, Omar Khadr?

Will he do this or will he sink—

The Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our position regarding Mr. Khadr remains unchanged. Mr. Khadr faces serious charges that include murder, attempted murder and terrorism.

We continue to closely monitor this situation, including the work of the American committee formed to study the fate of the detainees, including Mr. Khadr. Any speculation is premature at this time.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions comes into effect on March 18, 2007. Guided by Quebec, Canada signed that convention along with 95 other countries.

Since the United States has not yet signed, does the Prime Minister intend to put this on the agenda when he meets with President Obama, in order to convince him to sign the convention?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say this again. Our position regarding Mr. Khadr remains unchanged. Mr. Khadr faces serious charges, including murder. We continue to closely monitor the situation, including the work of the American committee formed by President Obama to study the fate of detainees, including Mr. Khadr.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs still has the same page. Canada has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That being the case, is the government of the opinion that the U.S. government has respected the standards set out by that protocol in the case of the detention of Omar Khadr at Guantanamo Bay? President Obama does not agree.

Does our government think that the U.S. government has respected the protocol, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, we continue to closely monitor the situation, including the work of the American committee formed by President Obama to look at the detainees, including Mr. Khadr. Our position has not changed. Omar Khadr faces serious charges, including the murder of a medic. We are aware but at this time any speculation is premature.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I asked the wrong question. Let me try it again.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. Whatever question the member is going to ask, the parliamentary secretary needs to be able to hear it. We will have some order so the member for Beauséjour can be heard.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary did not answer the question. Canada ratified the protocol on the convention of the rights of children. Does the minister believe the American government has respected the requirements of that protocol? President Obama believes it has not.

Oral Questions

Does the parliamentary secretary agree with President Obama or does he still agree with President Bush?

● (1455)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he should be asking the American government that question.

Let me state the position of the Government of Canada, not the government of America. The Government of Canada continues to closely monitor the situation, including the work of the American committee formed by President Obama to look at the detainee issue, including Mr. Khadr's issue.

Again, let me remind the member that Mr. Khadr faces serious charges, including the murder of a medic.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a scathing report has just been released about the secret procurement empire at the Department of National Defence. Among other things, the report reveals a communications system that was supposed to cost \$100 million ended up costing nearly \$300 million.

Why is this report so heavily censored? Will the minister allow the full report to be released today so Canadians can see why this contract tripled in cost?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a breakdown in the coalition communication. This is a pretty well reported secret.

We have a very strict review process in place at the Department of National Defence. We, of course, have the scrutiny of the House of Commons in addition to the Auditor General.

This particular contract has expanded in its costs and we are examining it. As we have seen in a number of situations, including having responded to the requests of the independent commission and the independent review of the mission in Afghanistan, there are costs associated with the Department of National Defence that do expand in relation to operations.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this runaway contract is just the latest example of how defence procurement has become synonymous with incompetence under the government.

How can the government claim to be accountable when it will not even tell us which rules, if any, it follows when it comes to these multi-million dollar contracts? If the minister does have faith in the procurement process, why will he not release the full report? If he still will not do that, will he at least tell this House how a \$100 million contract ended up costing Canadian taxpayers \$300 million?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the procurement process is accountable and transparent. This particular contract that the member is looking at is open to all the rigorous reviews that take place in contracts such as this. That information will be available to the hon. member.

She had an opportunity to ask questions about this when I appeared this week before the committee on supplementary estimates and she asked nothing about it.

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OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the one year countdown to the start of the Canada Olympic Games. As a British Columbian, I can say how excited everyone is back home.

Last weekend, I had the privilege of attending a celebration in Kamloops with thousands in attendance. Could the regional minister for British Columbia update the House on how Canadians will be celebrating from coast to coast to coast?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for her characteristic promotion of the interests of her constituents.

I can say that today, one year from the start of the Olympics, at venues all around British Columbia, especially in Vancouver and Whistler, the announcements have gone out. The venues are ready, with a state-of-the art made in Canada design, including the green energy technology and aboriginal art.

We think the athletes are ready. In events just last weekend, they won 28 medals, including 14 gold. With our announcement today, we are using trade offices around the world to say "Come to Canada. Come to the—"

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Sydney—Victoria.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Eskasoni is the largest native community in Atlantic Canada. It had four young people die by suicide just last week. I visited the community. It is in crisis.

The recent funds from Health Canada are only a short-term solution. Eskasoni has presented the government with a long-term proposal. The people of Eskasoni need to hear from the Minister of Indian Affairs. Is he going to act on their proposal to stop the tragic loss of lives?

● (1500)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to offer my condolences to the community and to the families of Eskasoni. Growing up in the north, I am very familiar with the issue and the impact it can have on a community.

Health Canada has met with INAC and the Eskasoni community. My department has been involved with this file from the very beginning. I can say that Health Canada provides Eskasoni with more than \$1.4 million in annual funding for counselling programs and services related to mental health.

I am committed to working with the community on a short-term and long-term basis, and will be in contact with the community on an ongoing basis.

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[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the railway infrastructure in the Montreal region is so old that some of the switches have to be operated by hand. The CN and CP lines must be upgraded to enable the Agence métropolitaine de transport, the AMT, to provide quality service to its users. The budget allocates \$407 million to upgrading rail lines located almost exclusively in Ontario.

Will the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities also commit funds to improve the rail lines used by the AMT's suburban trains?

[English]

Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is exciting when we see the economic action plan presented by the Minister of Finance. There is \$407 million in it for VIA Rail. There is a significant amount of infrastructure that is going to take place on rail. That is just one part of it.

There is also a significant amount of money that is left over from years previous. We are excited about this. The NDP obviously is not. It is unfortunate that all parties of this House are not excited to get this action plan done, get the money into the hands of Canadians, and we encourage them to do so.

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ETHICS

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, dramatic allegations of attempts to bribe former MP Chuck Cadman raised very serious questions and led to unprecedented actions. Now it seems questions about the scandal will not be answered because Conservatives and Liberals have huddled together in the cone of silence.

However, there is another victim. According to an expert hired by the Conservatives, journalist Tom Zytaruk was falsely accused of tampering with his audiotape of his interview with the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister and the government withdraw their allegations that he doctored the tape and apologize to Mr. Zytaruk?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear, in fact, that the tape was tampered. The matter is now settled and both parties are pleased with that settlement.

Oral Questions

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Tim Uppal (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the early 1980s recession, the Liberals cut immigration levels in half. Today we learned that a Liberal senator said that the government should halt the programs of foreign workers. She was not talking about temporary workers but all foreign workers coming to Canada. The Liberal Party must end this ugly anti-immigration rhetoric.

Could the Minister of Immigration tell us the government's position on this issue?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only did they cut immigration in half during the last major recession, the Liberals cut immigration levels by 75,000 after taking office in 1993. They froze settlement funding. They imposed a \$1,000 head tax on newcomers. They did nothing on foreign credential recognition. They drove up the backlog 20 times.

Now we have a Liberal caucus member giving voice to nativist sentiments, pitting immigrants against Canadians, in our economy. I would like to know if the leader of the Liberal Party will denounce and disassociate himself from these irresponsible remarks?

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ETHICS

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on September 23, 2007, the RCMP informed the Conservatives that there was no evidence to back up their accusations of theft and embezzlement against me by their official agent. Yet, two weeks later, other Conservatives distributed the same accusations of theft and embezzlement to the media and on the Internet. In fact, members can see those accusations against me on the website stephentaylor.ca.

Last week, the Minister of Public Safety said there was only one person involved, but now obviously there is more than one Conservative, and I do not mean Conservatives in this House, but there is more than one Conservative involved. Will they now release the names of all those Conservatives?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I advised this House previously, the RCMP looked into this matter and made it clear that there was no evidence of any wrongdoing with regard to the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

I also confirmed to this House that the Conservative Party was of the same view.

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[Translation]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Pierre Arcand, Minister of International Relations and Minister responsible for La Francophonie for Quebec.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Government Orders

[English]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the government House leader, I wonder if he could inform us of his plans for the business days in the House immediately ahead. Obviously, those plans have changed a bit since he last reported to the House, so I would be interested to know what he has in mind for the rest of this week and for the first week, at least, after the parliamentary break. Specifically, I wonder if the government House leader could tell us which days he intends to allot as supply days.

I would point out, secondly, that the government's first probationary report, with respect to its budgetary and economic performance, is due on or before March 12. I wonder when the government will be tabling that report.

● (1505)

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome those questions from the opposition House leader.

In a few moments we will be voting on the second reading stage of Bill C-10, the budget implementation act. Also, the House will approve supplementary estimates (B).

I would like to take this time to thank all members for their cooperation in accelerating the consideration and approval of supplementary estimates (B) including and especially my cabinet colleagues who responded with little notice to invitations from the various committees to study these estimates.

After the votes, we will continue with the debate on Bill C-4, not-for-profit legislation; followed by Bill C-9, transportation of dangerous goods; Bill C-5, Indian oil and gas; Bill C-11, an act to promote safety and security with respect to human pathogens and toxins; and Bill C-3, Arctic waters. All these bills are at second reading.

Next week is a constituency week when the House will be adjourned.

As the House is also aware President Barack Obama will be visiting Canada next week. Since the House will not be sitting, I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all members of the House, to welcome the President to Canada. We hope he has a productive and enjoyable visit here in our nation's capital.

When the House returns from the break, we will continue with the list of business I mentioned earlier and in addition to these bills Tuesday, February 24 and Thursday, February 26 will be designated as opposition days.

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: It being 3:09 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the second reading stage of Bill C-10.

Call in the members.

● (1515)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 6)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Ashfield	Bains
Baird	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Canniss
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel

LeBlanc
Lemieux
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum
McGuinty
McLeod
Mendes
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murray
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Oliphant
Paradis
Payne
Petit
Prentice
Proulx
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Simms
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilfert
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac — 211

Lee
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Menzies
Miller
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Pacetti
Patry
Pearson
Poilievre
Preston
Raitt
Ratansi
Regan
Richards
Rickford
Rodriguez
Russell
Saxton
Scheer
Sgro
Shiple
Silva
Simson
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bigras
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Chow
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Desnoyers
Dorion
Dufour
Faillie
Gagnon
Godin
Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevington
Black
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crête
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Dewar
Duceppe
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Freeman
Gaudet
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Government Orders

Hughes
Julian
Laframboise
Layton
Leslie
Lévesque
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Mourani
Nadeau
Paillé
Plamondon
Rafferty
Savoie
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Vincent

Hyer
Laforest
Lavallée
Lemay
Lessard
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair
Ouellet
Paquette
Pomerleau
Roy
Siksay
Stoffer
Thibeault
Wasylycia-Leis — 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

The next question is on the motion that Bill C-10 be read a second time and referred to a committee. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1525)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 7)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Bains
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brunoogoe
Cadman
Calkins
Cannis
Carris

Business of Supply

Casey	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	

Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac— 210

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Desnoyers	Devar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Ouellet
Pailé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Rafferty	Roy
Savoie	Siksay
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vincent	Wasylycia-Leis— 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B), 2008-09

The Speaker: Pursuant to orders made earlier today and on Wednesday, February 11, 2009, it is my duty to put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the Supplementary Estimates (B), 2008-09, tabled in the House on Thursday, January 29, 2009.

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved:

That Supplementary Estimates (B) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009 be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 8)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Ashfield	Bains
Baird	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent

Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Raïtt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskij	Yelich
Young	Zarac— 210

NAYS

Members

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevington
Black
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crête
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Dewar
Duceppe
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Freeman
Gaudet
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Business of Supply

Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Rafferty	Roy
Savoie	Siksay
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vincent	Wasylcyia-Leis— 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-12, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2009, be read the first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: The hon. Chief Government Whip on a point of order.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House, with Conservative members voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party will be voting yea.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois members will vote against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the NDP members vote no to this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, I vote yea.

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 9)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Ashfield	Bains
Baird	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeschen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayes

McCallum	McColeman
McGuinly	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Olyphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Rota	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac — 210

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hyer
Hughes	Laforest
Julian	Lavallée
Laframboise	Lemay
Layton	Lessard
Leslie	Malo
Lévesque	Marston
Maloway	

Business of Supply

Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Ouellet
Paillet	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Rafferty	Roy
Savoie	Siksay
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vincent	Wasylycia-Leis — 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole.

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Scheer in the chair)

(Clause 2)

[English]

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, while you are riveted to your seat, I would like to ask the following question. Could the President of the Treasury Board confirm that this bill is in its usual form?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Chair, if the member studies the material as closely as I did, he will find that the form of this bill is the same as that passed in the previous supply period.

The Chair: Shall Clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

● (1540)

[Translation]

The Chair: Shall Clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Shall Clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 7 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall Schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 1 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall Schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Title agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Bill reported)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be concurred in.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 10*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Ashfield	Bains
Baird	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coady
Coderre	Cotler
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback

Business of Supply

Hoeppe
Holland
Jean
Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum
McGuinty
McLeod
Mendes
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murray
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Oliphant
Paradis
Payne
Petit
Prentice
Proulx
Rajotte
Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Shiple
Silva
Simson
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Holder
Ignatieff
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kennedy
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lee
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Menzies
Miller
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville
Norlock
O'Neill-Gordon
Oda
Pacetti
Patry
Pearson
Poilievre
Preston
Raitt
Ratansi
Regan
Richards
Rickford
Rodriguez
Russell
Saxton
Scheer
Shea
Shory
Simms
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilfert
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac — 210

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bigras
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Chow
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Desnoyers
Dorion

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevington
Black
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crête
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Dewar
Duceppe

Dufour
Faille
Gagnon
Godin
Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Julian
Laframboise
Layton
Leslie
Lévesque
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Ménard (Hochelega)
Mourani
Nadeau
Paillé
Plamondon
Rafferty
Savoie
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Vincent

Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Freeman
Gaudet
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Hyer
Laforest
Lavallée
Lemay
Lessard
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair
Ouellet
Paquette
Pomerleau
Roy
Siksay
Stoffer
Thibeault
Wasylcia-Leis — 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be read a third time and passed.**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:***Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House.**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed this way?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

*(Division No. 11)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders

Business of Supply

Anderson	Andrews	Silva	Simms
Ashfield	Bains	Simson	Smith
Baird	Bennett	Sorenson	Stanton
Benoit	Bernier	Storseth	Strahl
Bevilacqua	Bezan	Sweet	Szabo
Blackburn	Blaney	Thompson	Tilson
Block	Boucher	Toews	Tonks
Boughen	Braid	Trost	Trudeau
Breitkreuz	Brison	Tweed	Uppal
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge	Vellacott	Verner
Byrne	Cadman	Volpe	Wallace
Calandra	Calkins	Warawa	Warkentin
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie	Sky Country)	Wilfert
Casey	Casson	Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Chong	Clarke	Wong	Woodworth
Clement	Coady	Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Coderre	Cotler	Young	Zarac— 210
Crombie	Cummins		
Cuzner	D'Amours		
Davidson	Day		
Dechert	Del Mastro		
Devolin	Dhaliwal		
Dhalla	Dion		
Dosanjh	Dreeshen		
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)		
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra	Allen (Welland)	
Easter	Eyking	Angus	André
Fast	Finley	Asselin	Ashton
Flaherty	Fletcher	Bachand	Atamanenko
Folco	Foote	Bellavance	Beaudin
Fry	Galipeau	Bigras	Bevington
Gallant	Garneau	Blais	Black
Glover	Goldring	Bouchard	Bonsant
Goodale	Goodyear	Brunelle	Bourgeois
Gourde	Grewal	Carrier	Cardin
Guergis	Hall Findlay	Chow	Charlton
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Comartin	Christopherson
Hawn	Hiebert	Crowder	Crête
Hill	Hoback	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Cullen
Hoeppner	Holder	DeBellefeuille	Davies (Vancouver East)
Holland	Ignatieff	Desnoyers	Demers
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Dorion	Dewar
Kania	Karygiannis	Dufour	Duceppe
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy	Faille	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent	Gagnon	Freeman
Kerr	Komarnicki	Godin	Gaudet
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake	Guay	Gravelle
Lauzon	Lebel	Basques)	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
LeBlanc	Lee	Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Lemieux	Lobb	Harris (St. John's East)	
Lukiwski	Lunney	Hughes	Hyer
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)	Julian	Laforest
MacKenzie	Malhi	Laframboise	Lavallée
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayes	Layton	Lemay
McCallum	McColeman	Leslie	Lessard
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Lévesque	Malo
McLeod	McTeague	Maloway	Marston
Mendes	Menzies	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Merrifield	Miller	Masse	Mathysen
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Moore (Fundy Royal)		Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau	Ouellet
Murray	Neville	Paillé	Paquette
Nicholson	Norlock	Plamondon	Pomerleau
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon	Rafferty	Roy
Obhrai	Oda	Savoie	Siksay
Oliphant	Pacetti	St-Cyr	Stoffer
Paradis	Patry	Thi Lac	Thibeault
Payne	Pearson	Vincent	Wasylycia-Leis— 84
Petit	Poilievre		
Prentice	Preston		
Proulx	Raït		
Rajotte	Ratansi		
Rathgeber	Regan		
Reid	Richards		
Richardson	Rickford		
Ritz	Rodriguez		
Rota	Russell		
Savage	Saxton		
Scarpaleggia	Scheer		
Schellenberger	Shea		
Shiplay	Shory		

NAYS

Members

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevington
Black
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crête
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Dewar
Duceppe
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Freeman
Gaudet
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Hyer
Laforest
Lavallée
Lemay
Lessard
Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair
Ouellet
Paquette
Pomerleau
Roy
Siksay
Stoffer
Thibeault
Wasylycia-Leis— 84

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

COMPLAINT OF ALLEGED THEFT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley on February 3, 2009, concerning an RCMP investigation into charges of embezzlement and theft of funds which he believes have damaged his credibility and, thus, his capacity to fulfill his duties as a member of Parliament.

[English]

I would like thank the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for having raised this serious matter, as well as the hon. chief government whip, the hon. member for Windsor West and the hon. member for Halifax West for their comments.

In raising this question of privilege, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley noted that he was first made aware of accusations against him by a journalist who contacted him after having obtained a copy of an RCMP report through an access to information request, a copy of which the member has kindly provided to the Chair.

He stressed that had the journalist in question not chosen to share the report with the member, he would not have had the opportunity to defend himself.

• (1545)

[Translation]

The hon. member went on to explain that much of the information in this report had been redacted or removed from the report, including the names of those who asked the RCMP to investigate and the exact nature of the allegations. This led him to conclude: “—so I do not know exactly what the charges are.”

Despite these specific omissions, the hon. member pointed out that his own name could be identified at the end of the document and that the document also stated that the allegations were brought forward by members of the Conservative Party of Canada. As well, the report noted a sum of \$30,000.

[English]

From these clues, the member inferred that what was at issue was the transfer of funds, also in the amount of \$30,000, between what was then his riding association and campaign accounts. It was thus presumably these financial transactions that were the basis of the allegation of embezzlement filed with the RCMP in September 2008.

In his submission, the hon. member took great care to stress that it was the riding association and the campaign team that necessarily executed these transfers, acting independently of the hon. member himself, and that the people involved “...followed the letter and spirit of the law, along with Elections Canada regulations”.

The hon. member contends that the report, despite stating that the matter warrants no further investigation, is ambiguous in its

Speaker's Ruling

conclusion and so still has the potential to cast doubt on his credibility and honesty and thus prevent him from effectively fulfilling his duties as a member of Parliament.

[Translation]

The hon. Chief Government Whip, in his reply, stated that the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley made reference to party members rather than any specific member of Parliament and that the member's submission was tantamount to a personal statement and not a question of privilege.

The hon. members for Windsor West and Halifax West were supportive of the concerns expressed by the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. The hon. member for Windsor West noted how unfounded allegations of this nature can affect the public perception of an individual and the individual's contribution to public life in Canada, while the hon. member for Halifax West underscored the danger of false accusations.

[English]

The Chair is of course entirely sympathetic to the plight of the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. However, in adjudicating questions of privilege of this kind, the Speaker is bound to assess whether or not the member's ability to fulfill his parliamentary functions effectively has been undermined.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, on pages 91 to 95, goes on at some length to stress the importance in this type of situation of establishing a link to parliamentary duties.

[Translation]

Two examples are useful to illustrate the importance of this linkage. In a 1978 ruling, Mr. Speaker Jerome rejected a claim by a member that a civil suit launched against him when he repeated on a radio talk show statements first made in committee was calculated to obstruct him in the performance of his parliamentary duties. The Speaker, in ruling that he could find no prima facie case of privilege, stated at page 5411 of Debates on May 15, 1978, that:

It seems quite clear that this matter has caused the member certain difficulties in the performance of his duties as a member of parliament, but I have trouble in accepting the argument that these difficulties constitute obstruction or harassment in the narrow sense in which one must construe the privilege of freedom from molestation—

• (1550)

[English]

In the second example, which dates from 1994, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, pages 94 and 95, states that a member:

...claimed he was being intimidated by the media and had received blackmail threats as a result of media reports concerning the authenticity of the Member's academic credentials. In finding that there was no prima facie question of privilege, the Speaker stated: “Threats of blackmail or intimidation of a Member of Parliament should never be taken lightly. When such occurs, the very essence of free speech is undermined. Without the guarantee of freedom of speech, no Member of Parliament can do his duty as is expected... While the Chair does not in any way make light of the specifics that have been raised...I cannot, however, say that he has sufficiently demonstrated that a case of intimidation exists such that his ability to function as a member of Parliament has been impeded.”

Government Orders

[Translation]

The following quotation from pages 91-92 summarizes the view taken by successive Speakers:

[English]

...rulings have focussed on whether or not the parliamentary duties of the Member were directly involved. While frequently noting that Members raising such matters might have legitimate complaints, Speakers have regularly concluded that Members have not been prevented from performing their parliamentary duties.

[Translation]

As the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley pointed out, the document had been severely edited, to remove the names of all the individuals involved, except for his own name which still appears in the document's file name at the end of the report. It was this that allowed the journalist to identify the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley as the object of the criminal complaint. Had his name not appeared in the document's file name, his identity might arguably have been protected.

[English]

Having reviewed the report in question, it is apparent to the Chair that the authors of the report were no more meticulous, not to say incredibly careless, than those who edited the document to comply with the usual practices in access to information requests.

The report contradicts itself repeatedly, first stating that there are "insufficient grounds or cause to warrant launching an investigation", then referring to "the outcome of the investigation", then going further to refer to the possibility of reopening the said investigation and then returning full circle to state that "no investigation will be occurring".

The redactors of the report who prepared it for release under access to information took pains to delete the names of the complainant or complainants, but left the name of the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley in the filename at the end of the document. Such apparent carelessness and the confusion that can result are no doubt just cause for concern. In fairness, it should be pointed out that on February 4, 2009, as can be seen on page 342 of *Hansard*, the Minister of Public Safety advised the House that the RCMP had confirmed that "this file was closed" and that "...Conservative Party officials have also made it clear that they do not believe that the hon. member in question, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, did anything wrong".

[Translation]

However, without minimizing the seriousness of the complaint or dismissing the gravity of the situation raised by the hon. member, it is difficult for the Chair to determine, given the nature of what has occurred that the member is unable to carry out his parliamentary duties as a result. Accordingly, the Chair must conclude that there is no prima facie question of privilege.

[English]

This does not take away from the potential reverberating effects of this case. By raising the matter in the House as he did, the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for-

cefully defended himself from these allegations, explaining that the facts show no hint of any wrongdoing whatsoever on his part.

His complaint is legitimate and he is correct when he laments that "The report is here forever. It is not going to go away" and when he spoke about the integral nature of trust and credibility to our work as members of Parliament.

[Translation]

Once again, I would like to thank the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House.

* * *

• (1555)

CANADA NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act respecting not-for-profit corporations and certain other corporations, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to speak on Bill C-4. I will begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill in principle—until there is evidence to the contrary, let me assure you.

The Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act, as it stood before, was what you might call a bit behind the times. The time had come to modernize it. Introduction of this bill is a step in the right direction.

The new legislation will, of course, take into consideration the financial means and the size of the organization with respect to the implementation of its administrative mechanisms. The intent is to provide the organization with a more flexible framework for presentation of its financial statements, and also for setting up its bylaws. The intent also is to considerably improve the efficiency and transparency of the process of incorporation of not-for-profit corporations.

The system of letters patent will be replaced by an as-of-right system of incorporation, thus greatly facilitating the process. As well, the credibility of not-for-profit corporations in the public eye will be enhanced.

This bill will be referred to a committee. It will, however, perhaps become necessary to hold broader consultations, above and beyond the simple parliamentary committee framework with experts attending. We may also have to involve community organizations.

Let us examine the context per se of the creation of the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act. The present act comes under the Canada Corporations Act. The types of corporations governed by part II of the Canada Corporations Act include—as we know—corporations that are not-for-profit, but religious, charitable, political or mutualist in character, as well as others.

Government Orders

In recent years, many people have voiced concerns about the obsolete nature of the Canada Corporations Act, and the fact that its provisions no longer meet the requirements of the not-for-profit sector, the not-for-profit sector of today. A number of stakeholders therefore called for the act to be reformed and improvements made to the framework that regulates that sector.

Around July 2000, Industry Canada produced a consultation paper entitled "Reform of the Canada Corporations Act: The Federal Not-for-Profit Framework Law". This led to the introduction of a bill that was first known as Bill C-21, which was introduced on November 14, 2004, by the Liberal government, but never made it past second reading.

On June 13, 2008, during the 39th Parliament, it was the Conservative government that introduced Bill C-62, but as we all know, an election was called, an election that I would describe as not only hasty, but even premature. When Parliament resumed on December 3, 2008, a similar bill was introduced by the Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism). Once again, because the House was prorogued, it was put off indefinitely.

● (1600)

Finally, in January 2009, Bill C-4 was introduced.

This bill has very clear objectives. It proposes a new Canada not-for-profit corporations act that would establish a more modern and transparent framework for such organizations. The operational framework for not-for-profit corporations would be much more similar to corporate governance under the Canada Business Corporations Act.

In more concrete terms, this bill will simplify the incorporation of not-for-profit corporations. It will also clarify the rights and responsibilities of boards and establish defences for officers and directors in the event of liability. It will also provide members with increased rights to participate in the governance of their corporation. Furthermore, it will establish a better mechanism for oversight of the corporation's accounts.

This bill seems to be relatively complex for some. It is divided into 20 parts in order to establish a new framework for not-for-profit organizations. The first thing, of course, is to identify the purpose of the bill, which is to incorporate corporations without share capital so that they may exercise their activities.

There is a definition of soliciting corporation. This term, of course, means any corporation that solicits public funding as well as any corporation that receives public donations or government grants.

The second part points out that the current letters patent system is being replaced with an as-of-right system. The director, after receiving and reviewing the required documents, can immediately issue a certificate of incorporation.

It also sets out the capacity of a corporation as a natural person. This section will have to be further developed because surely the related legal aspects and responsibilities are implied. Madam Speaker, we are both responsible for our actions. And so an organization will obviously be responsible for its actions, which will simultaneously protect the director, the board, the president and directors.

Of course, this would require that organizations keep accounting ledgers as well as a list of members and directors and make these documents available to members while still protecting privacy.

Allow me to digress for a moment. I am not going to go into detail about each of the 20 parts of this bill, but I must tell you that I was an accountant in another life. If I was not auditing, I was examining accounting ledgers, and if I was not doing that, I was preparing financial statements.

Unfortunately, I often found that certain organizations were led and controlled and that basically only one person participated in the organization. One person could solicit funds, collect them, use them and, unfortunately, sometimes use them for activities other than those that appeared in the charter at the time.

● (1605)

That needs to be mentioned.

We have to modernize the act so that similar situations do not arise again. Naturally, it gives them permission to borrow, to issue debt obligations and to invest as they wish. There are several technical aspects with respect to issuing debt obligations and the use of trust indentures. It outlines the role of the trustee if an organization were to be placed in receivership.

This bill also requires organizations to have at least one director or at least three in the case of a corporation that solicits funds. I am wondering about the element of responsibility. Sometimes I wonder how the act can state that there will be at least one director. That means that some organizations will have only one director. Does that also mean that there will be only one member? As I was explaining earlier, I am familiar with such cases. At least with this bill, if soliciting is involved, there must be three directors. Thus, public money donated by individuals has at least a chance of being used appropriately.

There is also a set of bylaws. The members must fulfill certain conditions. Thus, the bylaws set out the type of voting and the related voting rights. The voting procedure, the bylaws governing how members are to hold meetings, the calling of a meeting and quorum are all set out in the bill.

Another part talks about financial statements. It states that the organization must make available to its members the financial statements and any report submitted by its public accountant. It requires soliciting corporations to file a copy of their financial statements and public accountant's report with the director, who in turn makes them available to the public.

Government Orders

A multitude of non-profit organizations never submitted their financial statements, not even to members. With this bill, at least, the financial statements prepared by the public accountants will be forwarded to the corporation's director, who in turn will make them available to the public. That is a very important element.

The level of financial review required will be determined by the organization's revenues. For low-revenue organizations, a public accountant will conduct a review and submit a report. For medium-revenue organizations, if the board of directors so authorizes, the public accountant will review and report once again. For high-revenue organizations, the financial statements will have to be accompanied by an audit report. Here again, the reports will have to be submitted to the director of corporations, as I said earlier, and made available to the public.

The bill also refers to fundamental changes to what I will not call the charter, because that will no longer exist, but the organization of the not-for-profit corporation.

The bill includes provisions pertaining to proceedings to liquidate or dissolve a corporation. It also lists the powers a court can confer on an inspector who investigates a complaint filed by an interested person.

• (1610)

The bill contains provisions on offences. It also brings things up to date by allowing not-for-profit organizations to communicate with their members electronically. This bill therefore modernizes the legislation and allows for electronic equipment. That is something I wanted to mention.

Of course, there will be a three-year transition period for organizations to which part II of the Canada Corporations Act applies, which will now be recognized as corporations under the new legislation. There are some very important issues concerning this new bill, such as the fact that there is no classification system for NPOs in the Canada Corporations Act. Bill C-4 also does not include a classification system.

In the government's view, the new act does not need a classification system because the framework is permissive and flexible. Permissive can sometimes have a negative connotation. Nevertheless, this is a situation that exists within the new legislation because it is permissive and flexible and of course allows organizations to choose how to implement the relevant provisions. The accent is instead on the adoption of a set of rules intended to guide them in the conduct of their business, rather than imposing a system of rules they would be required to adhere to.

The fundamental concept underlying a classification system is that the corporations would be treated differently. Some would find themselves with more rules imposed on them by the State than others. As proposed here, most corporations would be treated in the same way and could enact various levels of regulation according to their requirements and the specific wishes of their members.

However, the opposite is true, according to the national charities and not-for-profit law section of the Canadian Bar Association. They feel that not including a general classification system is a major flaw in this bill. There is indeed a considerable difference between, for

example, a charitable or benevolent organization and a mutualist one, which I will explain.

I am being told that I have two minutes left, so I will move along rapidly. Let us take the mutualist organizations. The resources of these organizations are directed toward the membership, whereas the resources of charitable organizations are directed toward an object, which may be very specific individuals other than the members. The act has provision for this. In these organizations, the money is not supposed to be used for the membership, but in some it may be, depending on the characteristics of the members and the object and vocation of the organization.

I am getting the sign that my time is very nearly up, but I would like to caution my colleagues with respect to one important aspect of this bill.

As far as respecting the jurisdiction of Quebec is concerned, at the present time section 154 of the Canada Corporations Act stipulates that the federal minister may grant a charter to a corporation if it carries on objects of a national, patriotic, religious, philanthropic, charitable, scientific, artistic, social, professional or sporting character, or the like.

It would appear, however, that clause 4 of the proposed legislation would not oblige the not-for-profit corporations to stipulate in their by-laws the object they intend to pursue.

• (1615)

It could happen that the objects chosen and determined by the corporation encroach on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. There therefore needs to be provision for that situation in the act so that federal corporations do not encroach upon provincial areas of jurisdiction.

Let us therefore return this bill to the committee and carry out a thorough study of all the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville has the floor for questions and comments.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his explanations of Bill C-4. His activities in his previous life contributed a lot to his understanding of this bill.

I have a question for him. The minister introducing the bill would seem to be saying that the bill would promote transparency and require not-for-profit corporations to be accountable. I would ask my colleague to explain how this bill achieves the objective set by the minister.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

In the past, the directors of many not-for-profit organizations and the organizations themselves have been prosecuted. As I said at the start of my remarks, an organization is like a natural person. It may be prosecuted for various reasons under a number of environmental or civil liability laws.

In the matter of transparency, reference was made to the public disclosure of financial statements and many other matters I did not mention, such as the protection of members' privacy and the fact that the list could not thus be made available to everyone. There is also the matter of due diligence by directors.

Directors are protected when they act appropriately. In some other organizations, this may not always be the case. Some directors do not always necessarily act appropriately and could be prosecuted. And so, some directors who are being prosecuted and have made errors will have their costs covered. In this regard, while there may be transparency and accountability, it is still not clear whether a person is hiding errors behind due diligence. In this situation, costs would be covered in the case of mismanagement.

So there are a number of points. It may seem relatively complex, but a degree of transparency can be obtained through this bill. As I said earlier, the bill must be returned to committee to have certain aspects refined and, possibly, to address concerns of legal counsel, who have serious questions about various aspects.

[English]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the hon. member is very knowledgeable in this area, I would like his opinion on how he thinks we can continue to recruit volunteers to not-for-profit boards and to charities when it seems that this legislation will make it more difficult?

• (1620)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I understand what my colleague means when he says that the bill would make it more difficult. The Canada Corporations Act obviously had to be adjusted and modernized. In the old days, when people got their charter, they just turned around and went to work. They did not really have to produce any reports on the corporation itself. They had to report in a somewhat more regulated way when the corporation could issue charitable receipts.

According to my interpretation, not-for-profit organizations are not necessarily and automatically entitled to issue income tax receipts, even if they can raise money.

There are some nuances here, but I do not see anything in the bill that would make it any harder or easier for people to volunteer for not-for-profit organizations. I think volunteers are better protected than they used to be. Some things need to be cleared up, though, so they are not overprotected. People do accept a certain amount of responsibility. If they always exercise due diligence, if they do the right thing, they will no longer have to worry about being sued directly because it is clearer now with this bill that the corporation can be sued directly.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have worked with non-profit organizations for 35 years so I know full well the contributions they make to Canadian society. What really troubles me is the increasing downloading by our federal and provincial governments on to the non-profit sector to deliver services that really should be delivered by government.

Government Orders

I will give a concrete example. The government gives money to the Mennonite Immigration Centre in Edmonton, which is appreciated, to assist immigrants who are settling into Edmonton but it does not give the organization money for temporary foreign workers.

Out of the goodness of their Mennonite hearts, they continue to help those workers as well, many of whom are being laid off and stranded because they cannot afford to move back to their countries.

Rather than tabling this bill, why does the government not bring some real initiatives to the committees that will help the voluntary sector that has been downloaded with responsibilities for environment and social causes across the country?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Madam Speaker, I agree with much of what my colleague from the NDP said. I think, though, that we can do both.

Not-for-profit organizations are capable of raising money and even going out and getting grants without necessarily spending too much time on administration. They spend more of their time providing services to people who need them. The government is modernizing the act precisely in order to encourage this.

We still need to add some positive elements to the mix. In addition, I think the hon. member is right when she says the government should do more to help people who volunteer. These organizations are often left on their own. Good people spend a lot of time and even some of their own money helping the disadvantaged and the less well-off in our society. However, if governments, whether federal, provincial, Quebec or even municipal, started paying people who give so much of their won time, their entire budgets would probably be thrown off kilter. Government should definitely help these organizations. But should it provide unlimited support? I do not think so. There should be targets, which are more beneficial in terms of the return to society.

I think, therefore, that not-for-profit organizations that solicit money from the public should be regulated and government should make an effort to ensure that volunteers are also "rewarded" and, most importantly, helped to provide services to the most disadvantaged.

• (1625)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant 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 Jeanne-Le Ber, Immigration and Refugee Board; the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Employment Insurance.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, I first want to thank the hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook for sharing his desk with me. It makes my life a little easier to speak today.

Government Orders

I stand here today to speak to Bill C-4. It is important to note that I oppose this legislation, as do all New Democrats, as it appears today. We need to recognize the work that not-for-profit organizations and charities do. It is something that we all benefit from.

This legislation ensures that our country's not-for-profits and charities, organizations that look after our most vulnerable, help educate our children, support our seniors and help the disabled, will become bogged down with legislation rather than doing the work they are there to do.

Regulatory reform would be a minor improvement for the not-for-profit sector. This is certainly not its main priority. The bill only addresses one aspect of many that were raised during the voluntary sector initiative through consultations with not-for-profit organizations over the last decade. Special attention should also be paid to strengthening the privacy of members' information and lists and minimizing the regulatory burden imposed on not-for-profits by the copious amounts of legislation.

Canada's voluntary sector was not hoping for 170 pages of legislation of *Robert's Rules of Order*. Over years of consultations, this sector hoped there would be more important issues like securing stable, long term financing, clarifying and improving the charitable status process and advocacy needs that would be addressed.

I believe that if the government had been willing to spend as much time dealing with issues important to this sector as they have on regulating it, we could have had a stronger voluntary sector. This bill would tend to exclude lay people from starting or running not-for-profits.

I had the distinct honour and privilege of working for the United Way Centraide in Sudbury and district for five years. This year, with great volunteers like Jim Thompson, chair of the campaign, and Paul Gomirato, Abbas Homayed and Robert Keetch, just to name a few, and the staff, Michael Cullen, Vicky Lafond, Tiffany Sutton Taylor and others at that office, they raised a staggering \$2.43 million this year. A huge congratulations needs to go out to the United Way of Sudbury because that \$2.43 million is a new record. It is continuing to help fund programs in Sudbury. Over 60 programs were funded last year and I am sure it will be funding more programs in my community this year.

However, it is legislation like this that will inhibit the great work of organizations like the United Way Centraide in my riding. It would inhibit the great work of the YMCA in Sudbury and the efforts of John Schmitt, the executive director there. He, along with his staff, created a great program called "Building Strong Kids". It identifies the programs that children need and puts them into those specific programs to ensure they get the services they need. They can do this thanks to the United Way and the work that the United Way board of directors can do through their its campaign chair and volunteers to offer services to people in my riding. By doing that, they are able to help thousands in my community, which is great news for us in Sudbury.

However, what is worrisome about this legislation is that it will take people away from doing what they are very good at doing, which is raising the funds my community needs. Once they are able to raise the funds, the money is put into these great programs. If we

are bogged down in legislation and having to jump through loopholes and red tape, it will slow down the work that organizations like the United Way can do.

It would also inhibit the great work that the CNIB and Paul Belair, the executive director in Sudbury, are doing to help vision impaired people in my riding. I can keep going with Maison Vale Inco Hospice and Leo Therien; the Human League; the Red Cross; The Corner Clinic; Big Brothers Big Sisters; and Elizabeth Fry. All of those organizations are doing great work but there is some fear that legislation imposed by Bill C-4 will slow them down in doing what they are best at doing, and that is providing the services to the people in my riding.

● (1630)

This legislation would also inhibit the great work of the Social Planning Council of Sudbury. Janet Gasparini, its executive director, has provided great progress in providing reports on poverty reduction. We have done such a great job in Sudbury. We have identified the poverty reduction strategy. It has been endorsed by my Chamber of Commerce which is something I am very proud of. It has also been endorsed by the health unit. It has seen the importance of creating a poverty reduction strategy and the work we are putting forward into this through the not-for-profits and charities. Again, there is some fear that Bill C-4 would not help it address the needs it is talking about.

This legislation does nothing but provide a minor improvement in regulatory reform, but at a time when charities and not-for-profits need to focus on staying afloat in this economic downturn, they are being hit with new regulations. We have heard about the unfortunate layoffs at Xstrata over the last few days. This happened on Monday. Xstrata has been a great contributor to my community through the United Way, at the YMCA, and many other charitable organizations and many other not-for-profits. Its employees and the union, CAW Mine Mill, have actively been involved in the community.

The loss of 700 jobs in my community through Xstrata will actually inhibit the company and the union from providing the donations to many of these organizations that provide the services that they now will actually need. So, it is a Catch-22 in that sense, they are going to be using the services of the United Way and other organizations but at the same time these organizations are going to be struggling for dollars.

What does this mean for great organizations like the United Way and the YMCA? Regulations will not help recruit new board members. It will just scare them away from the copious amounts of legislation they must learn just to volunteer. One of the great things that the United Way does in Sudbury is it offers what is called a leadership development program. This program takes individuals between the ages of 18-29 and teaches them about the rules and regulations and about being a member on a board. We know that we need young people on more boards of directors across the country, especially in my riding. When we can train young people and give them the skills necessary to sit on a board of directors and become a member of a board of directors after one year, that is something we all should be embracing.

Government Orders

Right now this new legislation could inhibit this great program. It will actually have to reformat its whole way of teaching this legislation to its students. This program has done such a great job that it expanded into what we call community leaders on board. So now it is open to everyone of all ages within the community to get engaged in the voluntary sector, into not-for-profits, into charities to make sure that we have enough people, to ensure that the work that needs to be done in our community is getting done through the not-for-profit sector.

We have more regulations in this legislation for not-for-profits regarding transparency than is required by huge industry and big business. That is a shame. The increased regulatory requirements for not-for-profits are likely to result in higher costs for not-for-profits and the federal regulator alike. Despite assurances to the contrary, with no plan or assistance to help not-for-profits or charities in the bill, I do not see how we can continue to support this.

If this is now going to committee, it is important to look at what we can do to ensure we are actually going to make this a better bill. The legislation regarding not-for-profits and the charitable organizations right across the country needs to ensure that we can continue to help the most vulnerable, to help our seniors. But not-for-profits do more than just help our most vulnerable. I know our colleges and universities are not-for-profits. We have airport authorities that are not-for-profits, our Legions. We cannot let the same legislation guide an airport and then guide a Legion.

It is time that we oppose this legislation. We want to ensure that we put the right legislation in place to help these organizations in the future.

• (1635)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too share the member's concerns given that we have had consultations across the country for several decades on what we need to do to support the voluntary sector.

We do not need more awards and more accolades for the voluntary sector. We need genuine programs that will support the sector, particularly now when we have this economic decline. We need new rules in place to enable corporations to get greater credit for charitable donations. We need to provide support to these non-profit corporations to get trained in dealing with directors' liability, and in fact assisting them to get directors' liability insurance. I am in favour of making directors liable, particularly major corporations.

I agree with my colleague across the way that to impose this kind of provision at a time when we are downloading more of our social and environmental programs on the non-profit sector will set a pall over people volunteering to be directors. I only just found out this afternoon that a well renowned North American organization, The Nature Conservancy, has laid off several hundred people. This is the main mechanism in North America to set aside the protection of lands.

We need to wake up and we need to be bringing these major issues to the table, not simply reforming an outdated corporations act.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with what the member is saying.

As I mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity to be the executive director of the United Way in Sudbury for five years. Every time government programs or government funding was cut, the request to the United Way increased dramatically. There was a direct correlation. We always used to say that if the government only knew how this would impact the not-for-profit sector, when it makes these decisions, that we could move forward and make the positive changes it needed.

When I heard of Bill C-4, I truly was excited at the opportunity of knowing that we could make some great changes to help the organizations that are doing the work that is so important to so many of us. What ends up happening? We give them more regulation and more hoops to jump through, and that is not helping.

We recognize that we are in this economic downturn and we hear about stimulus packages and all of these great things, but ultimately the not-for-profit and charitable organizations are the ones that will be supporting the individuals who need the help the most during this downturn. What are we doing? We continue to handcuff them. That is not right. I say shame.

We need to move forward, make the right choices in this legislation, get some consultation from these organizations, and then present the bill to ensure that it moves us in the right direction.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's personal connection with the non-profit sector and the wealth of experience he brings to the House as a member of Parliament representing his region. I am just wondering what his thoughts are in terms of the role that charities play and perhaps the increasing role that charities may have to play as governments seek to devolve some of the services they provide to not-for-profit actors or charitable actors.

• (1640)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, I can use a very clear example. A few years back my community, like many communities, had a homeless crisis. We had so many people on our streets that we did not have enough places for them to sleep. This was in direct relation to cutbacks from federal funding.

What we needed to do was we needed to find a solution to this. As a charity, we did not have access to \$900,000 per year to solve the problem. My community was, at that time, raising about \$1.6 million from the United Way. There were other charitable organizations raising funds. But if we pull from one to give to the other, other places will suffer. Do we choose seniors, do we choose children?

It is time that governments stop cutting and start looking at the best things we can do to help charitable organizations and not-for-profits. Ultimately, they are the organizations that are doing the work. They are the ones that are on the front lines.

Government Orders

If we continue to cut and cut at these organizations and at their core funding, they are no longer going to exist. The work that the not-for-profits and the charities do in our country is worth billions of dollars. If we actually take that away, then it is up to the government to pay for that.

Right now, we know that in this economic downturn we need to stimulate the economy. We are hearing about the numbers of people losing their jobs, and they are still losing their jobs without the stimulus package. We need to ensure that the charitable organizations are there to provide supports to these individuals.

Right now, if this legislation were to continue to move forward, we would continue to handcuff these charities and these not-for-profits with, again, legislation that would slowdown the process of getting them doing what they do so well, which is providing services to the individuals who live in our communities.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, today we are talking about Bill C-4, An Act respecting not-for-profit corporations and certain other corporations. It is clear that, on the surface, this bill seems to be a good one. The Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of the principle underlying this bill.

I listened to the preceding comments. This bill provides a framework for organizations and helps them get organized. It updates an archaic law. Our community organizations need more money, but we do not recognize their true value any more than we do that of not-for-profit organizations. If every not-for-profit organization and every volunteer ceased operations or quit tomorrow, our society would crumble. They keep our social fabric intact. That is why it is a good idea to update the legislation governing them.

This bill is at second reading. I hope that it will get to the committee stage so that the members who are on committees can study it in great detail to ensure that, on the one hand, directors of not-for-profit organizations can enjoy a certain degree of flexibility and openness, and that, on the other hand, the administration of these organizations is transparent.

Bill C-4 modernizes the current Canada Corporations Act. It will consider the financial means and the size of the organization in determining management standards. As the minister said, it will also provide a flexible framework for financial reporting and the establishment of internal bylaws for the organizations it governs.

Not-for-profit organizations need to be more efficient and transparent. We also have to consider the fact that, when a not-for-profit organization asks the minister to be recognized as such, there is a great deal of discretionary power. It looks like this bill eliminates the minister's discretionary power, and that is something we really need.

There is a reason the new Bill C-4 was drafted. Over the past few years, many not-for-profit organizations, as well as the Canadian Bar Association, have examined the problems the archaic law created for not-for-profit organizations. They wanted legislation that was more consistent with the needs of modern not-for-profit organizations. They asked the government to rewrite the legislation, so now we have Bill C-4.

The goal of this bill, according to the minister, is to establish a more modern and transparent framework for these organizations. The operational framework for not-for-profit corporations would be similar to corporate governance under the Canada Business Corporations Act. That is not a bad thing. Quite often, having an archaic piece of legislation regarding not-for-profit organizations means that we have not listened to their requests and priorities.

• (1645)

In more concrete terms, this bill will simplify the incorporation of not-for-profit organizations; clarify the rights and responsibilities of directors, which is an excellent thing itself; and will establish defences for officers and directors in the event of liability. Today, directors, who are quite often also the employers in not-for-profit organizations, are subject to all sorts of grievances and to all sorts of laws that employees or suppliers can use to get them into serious trouble. It is good that they can have more solid defences.

The bill will provide members with increased rights to contribute to the governance of their organization. Perhaps the committee should focus more on this point. That would respond to the requests from some of my colleagues who have said that organizations and their members must have a little more power. The bill will establish a better mechanism to oversee the organization's accounts, leading to transparency.

However, and I would like to draw the House's attention to this point, according to the Canadian Constitution, management of the social economy, volunteerism and community activities fall under provincial jurisdiction. It is important to note that the federal government only has jurisdiction over organizations that do not have provincial purposes. The committee must examine this aspect in order to discern if this bill oversteps its area of jurisdiction and infringes on provincial jurisdictions, namely those of Quebec. At present, the section of the Canada Corporations Act states that the federal minister may grant a charter of incorporation if the corporation thereby created pursues objects of a national, patriotic, religious, philanthropic, charitable, scientific, artistic, social, professional or sporting character, or other. However, these activities must be under the authority of the Parliament of Canada.

We note that clause 4 of the new act does not require a non-profit to state its intended purpose in its articles of incorporation. Thus, it is important that the non-profit's purpose and specific mandate be clearly identified in its articles of incorporation in order to ascertain whether the organization is involved in the jurisdictions of Quebec or of other provinces. It is extremely important and the committee will have to examine that issue.

I am only going to discuss a few clauses of the bill, those that, in my mind, apply to the day-to-day operations of community organizations.

Government Orders

First, part 1 of the bill provides for the incorporation of organizations without share capital for the purposes of carrying on legal activities. That is what the current law permits; there is not much difference. It defines the concept of a soliciting organization as one that solicits funds from the public or a government or any organization that receives private donations or government grants. That is found in part 1.

Part 4 requires organizations to prepare and maintain accounting records. That is very important. I was saying earlier that this bill provides a clear framework for managing a non-profit organization.

• (1650)

Quite often, not-for-profit corporations that have been established for many years must suddenly hold an annual general meeting and change directors. Then the director wants to change certain aspects of the organization's mandate and objectives. The bill establishes a framework in which books must be kept, directors named, and membership lists made available. Thus, there is an obligation for transparency.

With this, transparency is mandatory. First of all, books must be kept, along with a list of the members and directors, and people must be able to access those documents. Quite often, in a not-for-profit corporation, such as an MS society, for example, people are overseen by directors who themselves have MS. Sooner or later, however, their strength will decline. The organization will have to change directors or will no longer have a director. Then what will happen?

The members of such organizations must be known, so that they can be called upon and consulted when it is time for someone else to take up the torch.

Part 5 permits organizations to borrow funds, issue debt obligations and make investments as they see fit. Some not-for-profit organizations have money for research and other purposes. For instance, if a fundraising event is organized for a spinal cord foundation and \$200,000 is raised, can that foundation take that money and invest it in research? This gives them a guarantee. It opens a door for them. It gives them both transparency and freedom.

Part 9 stipulates that the organizations must have at least one director and, in the case of soliciting corporations, three directors. That is the minimum. That ensures honesty within the organization and also gives people who support the cause and give money to the organization much greater confidence in the directors. As a result, people will know that there is not just one individual who knows the books and could pocket the corporation's money.

The bill also clearly sets out the obligations of directors and organizations as well as the due diligence defence. I mentioned that earlier. Due diligence clearly states the duties, obligations and responsibilities of the general directors of a not-for-profit foundation or organization. It also gives them a safety net. At present, anyone could suddenly accuse directors of lining their pockets. Directors are not protected from that. And it could just as easily be either true or false. Imagine the ordeal those people have to go through if it is false. They cannot defend themselves; that opportunity does not exist. This measure will afford them a certain amount of security.

Directors and officers of NPOs are currently exposed to numerous liabilities under the provisions of certain pieces of legislation

including liability for environmental damages, liability for unpaid salaries, fiduciary duty, and liability for their own negligent actions.

There are many kinds of not-for-profit organizations. Some of them demand huge numbers of hours, huge amounts of energy and listening skills from their volunteers, officers and directors. Quite often, these people are tired and are subject to all sorts of weaknesses and they can be subjected to all sorts of allegations.

• (1655)

Often they work with people who are ill, as well, so they need an established or set management framework for their own protection. As well, not-for-profit organizations cannot always afford lawyers to help or advise them in certain cases. A framework gives them some security.

Another extremely important aspect of this bill is part 10, which provides that an organization's by-laws must set out the conditions of membership. I am talking not just about all the rules for being a member of a not-for-profit organization, but also the rules for holding meetings of the membership.

As I said, often, these people work in difficult environments, and they are not as procedurally oriented as we are here in this House, so they need some guidance. They want to do everything they can, but they do not always have accountants or lawyers to help them. Part 10 lays some ground rules, which are good to have.

Part 11 provides that an organization must make its financial statements available to its members. This is extremely important. When organizations are transparent and open and make their books available, they are less likely to be criticized, and people often have questions about an organization's financial situation, whether there is money to carry on or invest, or simply what the organization is doing. It is only natural that organizations, especially NPOs, should disclose what they have.

In my opinion, part 12, which pertains to financial reviews, has to do with confidence in the directors. Small not-for-profit organizations cannot afford to pay an auditor, so they will often work with accountants who provide their services free of charge as a way of giving to the organization. It is their way of helping the organization. Of course, large organizations like the United Way—which raises \$8 million, \$10 million, \$15 million, \$20 million or \$100 million, I would imagine—must be audited, but their situation is different.

Government Orders

Part 14 describes the process for liquidation and dissolution of a corporation incorporated under this legislation. That is very important. Once, in my little corner of the world, in my region, a local organization had to close its doors when a regional organization took over. What is to be done in a situation like that? I should point out that not-for-profit organizations do not necessarily have the means, the physical resources, or the staff needed to liquidate or dissolve the corporation. This bill provides guidelines for that process.

Part 16 covers protection and security. It sets out the offences and penalties imposed in case of an infraction, particularly with respect to false and misleading statements and the misuse of information from a list of members or other register kept by the organization. Every NPO administrator must inform the organization's members, administrators or shareholders, as the case may be, of this provision. Members' names must not be given to other organizations, such as businesses, that might misuse them.

This bill is very important. The committee will have to examine this matter as well as the constitutional issue with respect to encroachment on provincial jurisdiction.

● (1700)

The committee will have to examine whether this bill provides enough flexibility and permissiveness to not-for-profit organizations to allow them to grow transparently and accountably in the best interest of the people who use the services.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the problems with this bill is that it does not make allowances for the size of the not-for-profit organization. In particular, although there are allowances for financial reporting, it does not make allowances for things like voting and the requirement to pass resolutions and record them and maintain membership lists. In other words our small local legions or not-for-profit anti-poverty groups will be forced to have the same bureaucratic requirements as the large not-for-profits, such as the United Way.

In my own constituency the local legions, including the one on Fraser Street of which I am a member, do an incredible job in our community. They give countless volunteer hours and support thousands of amateur athletes through their hard work and volunteerism.

They are having a tough time hanging on now. They need property tax relief. They need a refundable tax credit for their dues. What they do not need is more red tape and burdensome bureaucratic paperwork.

I would ask my hon. colleague to comment on this. I would also like her opinion on how the bill might impact the hard work, for example, of legions that are operating in tough times across this land.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the NDP.

His question touches on two aspects I have just spoken about. First of all, this bill is at the second reading stage and so will be referred to a committee. I trust that the hon. members in committee

will be alert enough to look at the details and the irritants with a potential to be harmful to small not-for-profit organizations.

It is important to refer the bill to committee because there is no mention of classification. I concede the point made by my colleague from the NDP that there are indeed irritants that will be dreadful for the smaller organizations. What is more, the largest ones always end up with the money. In my opinion, this should be discussed in committee.

Finally, it is still a good thing, if only for the small ones, since the large ones will not benefit from the aspects and issues addressed by this bill. The small ones do not have the money and resources, nor the ability to acquire them. If we can clarify the framework within which they operate, that will be one step along the way. When it comes to looking for the money, we will introduce another bill and ask the Liberals to vote against the budget, and we will ask for funds for our organizations.

● (1705)

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague for her heartfelt and relevant speech. I would like to ask her a question since she is very involved with these community organizations and not-for-profit organizations.

In July 2000, Industry Canada published a consultation document entitled "Reform of the Canada Corporations Act: The Federal Not-for-Profit Framework Law". After releasing this document, the department held a series of round tables in cities across the country to look at the ideas in the document. And so Bill C-4 was born.

Given that she is involved with these community organizations, I would like to know if she was kept up-to-date on or knew if any round tables took place in her area. If so, does she know if the organizations were allowed to participate and bring their ideas to flesh out, in the most ideal way possible, this legislation that concerns them? And knowing this, does she think it would be relevant to not only have the bill studied in committee, but to also consult community organizations of all sizes, so that the bill would be adaptable to any situation?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I have not heard that the Government of Canada or Industry Canada came to consult not-for-profit organizations in Quebec. I do know that the former program that recognized not-for-profit organizations under the Liberal government was tossed aside by the Conservative government.

I do not believe that organizations in Quebec are very interested in this bill. First, they are used to coming under the Government of Quebec. They know they will go to the Government of Canada for a number so that they can issue income tax receipts. In Quebec, not-for-profit organizations will not turn directly to the federal government. As a result, they likely did not hear about these consultations. I am close to my organizations and I never heard about them either. Maybe there were consultations in the rest of Canada.

The way not-for-profit organizations are organized in Quebec is very different from the way they are organized in the rest of Canada. We are ahead of the curve and used to doing our own thing, coming under the Government of Quebec and not expecting anything from the federal government. It has never been present, except in the previous legislation where organizations could get a grant. It took three weeks to a month to fill out a 50-page application and get a grant of no more than \$1,000 to \$5,000.

In answer to my colleague's question, I do not recall any consultations in Quebec.

• (1710)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS ACT, 1992

Hon. Josée Verner (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the second reading of Bill C-9, our proposed amendments to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992.

Some of my Ontario colleagues might remember what happened on Saturday, November 10, 1979 in Mississauga, Ontario. A few minutes before midnight, CP train No. 54 derailed while carrying a shipment of chlorine and 250,000 people had to be evacuated from that area. Indeed, this particular incident stands as the second largest peacetime evacuation in North America, surpassed only by the evacuation of New Orleans during hurricane Katrina in 2005. Very fortunately, no one was injured in that incident, but the risk was indeed extreme. As is the case whenever we are dealing with transportation of dangerous goods, no chances should be taken.

We can never predict when incidents like that may happen, whether accidentally or on purpose. That is why this government has the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act in place. Originally introduced in 1980 and updated in 1982, it provides the federal government with the authority to develop policy, to verify the compliance, to conduct research, to guide emergency response,

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and develop regulations and standards to manage risk and promote public safety during the transportation of dangerous goods.

In the bill before the House today, our government is proposing amendments to the act as yet another example of how the Conservative government is taking steps to protect and improve Canadians' way of life and public safety in Canada.

Today there are more than 26 million commercially available chemicals sold around the world, and more than 46 million organic and inorganic substances registered with the Chemical Abstract Society. Indeed, more than 30 million shipments of dangerous goods are transported every year in Canada alone. That is right, over 30 million shipments of dangerous goods in Canada alone.

Trade, whether between the provinces or across the border with the United States, continues to grow steadily. Dangerous goods are likewise being transported across national and provincial boundaries more often than ever before.

The provinces approached the federal government to bring forward federal legislation that could help deal with this trade and provide Canadians with the appropriate public safety protections that provincial legislation by itself could not do.

Between Canada and the United States, agreements ensure ease of trade while maintaining safety. In most cases, this permits a shipment of dangerous goods originating in one country to be transported to its final destination in another country without interference, provided, of course, that the shipment is in compliance with the rules of the originating country.

As I said earlier, our transportation of dangerous goods program is based on the premise that proper classification of dangerous goods is absolutely vital to its safe transportation.

Our program is actually harmonized and aligned, as appropriate, to international, United Nations and United States conventions. This new bill will be no different. In fact the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992 is under criminal law and applies to all matters relating to the importation, transportation and handling of dangerous goods.

Provincial legislation addresses mostly local transportation on highways. Federal regulations are adopted in one form or another by each and every province and territory.

The current act and regulations are enforced by federal and provincial inspectors. Agreements on shared enforcement result in the provinces focusing primarily on highway inspections and the federal government dealing with marine, rail and air transport and shipping activities.

When the current act came into force, no one at all could have envisioned a new security environment that would emerge following the terrorist attacks of September 11, the transit bombings in London in 2005, or the attempted bombing of the Glasgow airport in 2007.

The current act is based primarily on prevention of disasters during the transportation of these dangerous substances and right now focuses less on the safety and the response capabilities of the government.

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This government's proposed amendments in this bill, on which my colleagues will elaborate further, would significantly expand the measures used by the federal government in cases involving dangerous goods.

• (1715)

By working with our provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as key stakeholders and law enforcement, these new safety and security requirements will keep Canadians safe.

In March 2004, the department began broad-based consultations to provide an appropriate review of the act. Meetings were held with industry shippers, manufacturers and producers, industry associations, unions, provincial and territorial governments, first responders to matters of safety, and the public and cities all across Canada. These consultations generated extensive and substantive input, which is reflected in new Bill C-9.

What is more, in 2005 Transport Canada hosted meetings with officials from provincial and territorial governments to discuss the new concepts and potential amendments to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992. Discussions continued at each of the twice annual meetings of the federal-provincial-territorial task force on dangerous goods and also at the twice annual meetings of the minister's transportation of dangerous goods general policy advisory council.

Results of the department's consultations with industry, provincial and territorial governments and the public certainly underscored the value and relevancy of the current act while supporting the existing safety program and new security concepts being considered in the amendment of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act.

Following the tabling in the last Parliament of Bill C-9, the department again met with the federal-provincial-territorial task force and the minister's transportation of dangerous goods general policy advisory council, as well as any interested parties on an individual basis to consult on the contents of the bill. This government wants to make sure that all consultations lead toward the best results for Canadians.

Under this revised legislation, shippers of dangerous goods would be required to submit an emergency response assistance plan, an ERAP, to the federal government prior to shipping dangerous substances. These plans outline detailed actions that would be taken by the shipper in case of an accident, including a list of specialized equipment needed to clean up the area. Preparation is the key to this. The plans also provide on-site assistance to local authorities. In the event an incident did occur, this new legislation would allow the federal government to use the measures and resources outlined in the corresponding ERAP to respond to the situation accordingly.

The proposed changes would also allow the federal government to use resources from the private companies that transport the substances in question to respond to the emergency itself, with the understanding, of course, that they would be properly compensated for whatever they were out.

On the security and prevention side, the bill would provide the authority to establish performance regulations for security plans and for training. These would be based on international and United

Nations recommendations and in line, quite frankly, with existing U.S. regulations.

With respect to the safety amendments, consultations to improve the existing ERAP indicated that any proposed bill should include automatic activation as well as an authority for an inspector to activate a plan. I think that makes sense. I am pleased to say that these recommendations are reflected in this legislation.

It would also enable the development of regulations to establish security requirements for tracking dangerous goods, as well as regulations that would require companies to report lost or stolen dangerous goods. With the threat of global terrorism affecting all nations, including Canada, the government's proposed amendments also address the security of dangerous goods while being transported, stored or otherwise.

To do this, we will require: security plans and security training for all personnel handling or transporting those said goods; additional transportation security clearances for individuals transporting dangerous goods, such as truck drivers, et cetera; and the ability to track dangerous goods during transport.

Canada's role on the world stage continues to grow in importance and we are very fortunate to host a greater number of international events here in Canada. As such, there is growing concern about the need for these important security measures to be in place, and as quickly as possible.

• (1720)

The Vancouver 2010 Olympics is a prime example of this. If there is an incident involving dangerous goods, we need to ensure we have the necessary resources and the capacity to respond appropriately.

Under the proposed bill, the minister or deputy minister would be given authority to establish security measures and interim orders. An interim order would be used as an immediate regulation to respond to an urgent and immediate identified threat where the normal regulatory process, for instance, would take too long to protect public safety. The interim order would become public 24 days after Governor in Council approval. Only the Minister of Transport can put in place an interim order, and this interim order can only be established if the government has the legislative authority to currently make a regulation. Let me be clear. An interim order cannot be used to make regulations that the government does not already have the authority to make under the legislation.

The interim orders we are looking to introduce in this proposed bill would work exactly the same way as they already do in 10 other pieces of legislation across federal departments and agencies, including the Public Safety Act.

Conversely, a security measure is a regulation that would be used to respond to an immediate and urgent identified threat where publishing the regulation would compromise its intent and indeed public safety.

Security measures are required to be reviewed every two years to ensure that they are still valid and required, and to determine if at any time they can be made public. If a security measure is no longer required, it can be repealed immediately.

This bill would also give an inspector the authority to access facilities involved in manufacturing, repairing or testing means of containment according to identified standards and procedures. This is absolutely critical and of very great importance to the success of the safety program. Without the access to manufacturers of means of containment, it becomes very difficult and very expensive for the government to verify that the means of containment are built to the required standard. Failure to build a means of containment to standard may lead to major failures, putting public safety again at risk, and this is simply not acceptable to this government. We will not let that happen.

The federal government has consulted with industry, with provincial and territorial representatives and other key stakeholders that wanted to have input and all of them agree that these amendments are necessary.

It is important that we move forward with the amendments to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act. If we do not move forward, we will not have the tools necessary to promote the security of the Canadian public arising from the modern security environment in which we live, including the risk of terrorist activities involving any dangerous goods.

Moreover, our continental partners are expecting Canada to bring forward security requirements for the transportation of dangerous goods and to do our part to keep North America safe and secure.

These initiatives brought forward today would harmonize security requirements for activities, such as security plans and security training, and enable the government to have a prevention and response security program for what all of us in this place and all Canadians are looking forward to, that being the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

I must reinforce that not moving forward with an amended Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act may expose Canada on both the safety and the security fronts, two significant trade implications with our North American partners, something this government has no intention of doing, especially during these times of economic challenge and global economic downturn.

This government remains very committed to doing what is right for Canadians to ensure that we have the appropriate security and safety prevention and response program in place, to maintain and enhance public safety around the transportation of dangerous goods.

We look forward on this side of the House to the co-operation and the input of the other parties, as we believe that this is a tremendous time for Canada to move forward to keep Canadians safe, and we are looking for their support in this.

• (1725)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca, a wonderful part of Alberta, for bringing forward the bill. It sounds very laudatory.

When I was the first chief of enforcement for Environment Canada, I was involved in major sting operations, involving fuel cocktails where shipments for disposal were brought into Canada. That was the first alert that we needed to work more closely with our

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American neighbours. Then when I worked at the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, I initiated a project with Mexico, the United States, and Canada to get a better handle on the tracking enforcement of these shipments.

Sadly, the past few governments have intervened and put the priority on fast-tracking the movement of these dangerous goods for the purpose of NAFTA.

I welcome the changes coming forward. There seems to be far more interest. Is this coming from our American neighbours? Instead of concentrating on the issue of hazard goods moving into our country and putting us at risk, the issue, I am presuming, is coming from the United States asking for security checks on our truckers.

Has the member consulted with the Commission for Environmental Cooperation enforcement working group that has an initiative on dealing with transborder shipments of hazardous waste, including working on shared intelligence.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that many stakeholders were consulted, including the provinces and the territories. I am not sure about the particular one my colleague is interested in, but I would be happy to find that out for her.

I can assure the member and all Canadians that the priority of this government and our Prime Minister, as has been heard many times in the House, is the safety and the security of Canadians, and we are going to ensure we do that. As well, there are economic advantages to ensuring our trading partners are happy with some of the things we have done to keep Canadians safe because ultimately that is their job as well.

Our primary concern is keeping Canadians safe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the parliamentary secretary. He is aware that the transportation of dangerous goods is a responsibility shared between Ottawa and the provinces and territories.

Can he explain what sort of discussions the Department of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has held with the Province of Quebec and also with the other provinces to ensure that provincial and territorial jurisdictions are respected?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member for some period of time and his questions have always been excellent, as is this one.

I can assure him that we have been in detailed discussions with all the provinces and territories to ensure we work together to have provinces or territories adopt the part of the legislation they want in their rules to ensure they are consistent throughout the country. Some of the provinces have not done this.

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I understand consultations have gone on for some period of time and there is some difference between provinces in their provincial acts, but for the most part they are very happy with the initiatives by this government in Bill C-9.

I understand those consultations will continue on a twice a year basis for one group and another twice a year basis for another group. They will continue.

• (1730)

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague from Fort McMurray—Athabasca tell us how the bill would affect all Canadians across the country? Also, how would it affect the 2010 Olympics that will be held in Vancouver?

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I share a border between Saskatchewan and Alberta, so I understand his interest in the transportation of dangerous goods and how the legislation would keep Canadians, especially his constituents, safe.

I can assure him that the initiatives by the government, especially the submission of an emergency response assistance plan, will ensure that we can keep Canadians safe. If some disaster or some sort of accident does happen and we have to worry about a spill, we will be able to more effectively deal with it quicker and know exactly what the emergency responders are in for and have the proper equipment on hand as soon as possible to deal with the accident.

As far as the Olympics, this is the reason why the government moved forward so quickly with this legislation both in the last session and again in this one. Without the legislation, we will not have the effective safety and security that is necessary for the Olympics.

That is why I think all members in the House will join with the government on this legislation, push it forward as quickly as possible, to get the best results for Canadians, which is to keep them safe and secure.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague a couple of questions.

First, his government has failed to tell my province of British Columbia how much money it will spend for the security costs to cover the security needs of the 2010 Olympics. It is a huge problem for the provincial government. Would the member like to tell the House when his government will tell my province when it will pay for security costs and how much that will be?

Second, DND firefighters have asked for a change in the accrual rate of their pensions. We know actuarially that they do not live as long as the average Canadian. In fact, their average lifespan is only about 59, whereas it is 79 for a male and 82 for a female. Why has my friend's government not implemented the change in the accrual rate for DND firefighters who give of their lives, are brave souls and are the first people who respond in dangerous times when there are chemical spills or spills of hazardous materials?

The Deputy Speaker: I am not sure if the question by the hon. member is relevant to the bill being debated, but I see the hon. parliamentary secretary is rising. If he wishes to comment, he may.

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, when I had the opportunity to look at the legislation brought forward by the government after only two years in office, I asked myself a very similar question. Why would the previous Liberal government, which that person was a member of, not do anything in over 10 years when it had the opportunity and knew it needed to do so, especially when it knew what happened on September 11?

We are moving forward with this legislation aggressively to ensure we keep Canadians safe. Why did member, when he was in government, not take the opportunity to move this kind of legislation forward?

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think Canadians have a problem with regulating the transportation of dangerous goods. What concerns me about the bill is the effect it has on people. Clause 5.2 of the proposed bill says that no prescribed person shall handle, among other things, any dangerous goods unless that person has a transportation security clearance.

I happen to know through my work prior to being elected that right now there are very onerous obligations imposed upon Canadians handling federal materials, whether it is at airports, ports or in warehouses. In particular, the United States has compelled Canadians to be subjected to extreme invasions of their privacy, including things like providing biometrics, fingerprints, criminal record checks and supplying information about their spouses and even sexual preference.

My question for the member is twofold.

First, could he give assurances that no Canadians will have their constitutional and charter rights violated by complying with this transportation security clearance to satisfy the Americans?

Second, will the bill and the security clearance apply to people who do not cross borders but who simply live and work in Canada so American incursions into our privacy are imposed upon Canadians on Canadian soil? Just like under the Security and Prosperity Partnership, our civil rights have been eroded under the government's watch.

• (1735)

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the member that I had a friend some time ago who worked with dynamite. He was not properly trained and now we call him Lefty.

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What is important is we first keep Canadians safe and secure. That is ultimately what we need to do. To have people going around the country without proper training or without knowing what they have in the back of their trucks is not acceptable, especially if there is an accident. Roadways are congested at this stage, especially in major centres. Having trucks go through major centres with chlorine or other products that can cause serious problems for Canadians is just not acceptable. Indeed, they need to ensure people are properly trained and understand what they are carrying. That is why the need to be certified.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to engage in this debate, especially after the parliamentary secretary. We always have an opportunity to correct the record after he speaks because he engages us in a historical perspective on events usually laced with a bit of partisanship, even though we are dealing with a very serious topic.

I enjoy the opportunity simply because there is always a chance to re-address and clarify exactly what is happening with some of the legislation.

This bill was born out of an initiative, since the hon. parliamentary secretary mentioned this a moment ago, of a government of which I was a part. It is the Liberal government that he wishes to emulate so assiduously. First, in 1992, when that Liberal government was in opposition, it prompted amendments to the Transportation Act. Second, the Liberal government initiated a series of studies in 2002 and consultations in 2004 in order to lead to legislation that we have before us today.

Although I am a little too kind to repeat it in its original form, one might say that the Conservative government has waited far too long to present the bill, even though it had in its disposition prior studies and work and energies contributed to the satisfaction of a problem that the legislation attempts to resolve.

However, those of us who were a part of the Liberal government, which the parliamentary secretary suggests was not as quick to address the problem as he would make it out to be, proposed through our consultations a five point plan. I am pleased the government has accepted those proposals.

That five point plan engages these words. If we think about it each one of the words, then we will get an appreciation of what it was that we on this side of the House wanted to accomplish and indeed planned to accomplish in legislation to address the movement of dangerous goods throughout the country.

First is the word “reinforce” as in reinforcing the existing emergency response assistance program. I say this, before I go on to the other four, because it is important not to raise the spectre of paranoia that the parliamentary secretary has visited upon us. He has suggested that the world might collapse if we stop to study the legislation for but a mere moment. I say this because a plan was already in place. There is a response mechanism, but it is to reinforce. This is the first key. It is the first sense we on this side of the House want everyone to appreciate, that we had already infused into the process.

The second one is “require”, requiring, obligating security training and screening. We can think about that again. We were talking a

moment ago about reinforcing. Now we are talking about requiring. One requires training only when it is being applied voluntarily and perhaps not as assiduously as the rest of the public's interest might demand.

The third word is “enabling”. Enabling for us in the House always suggests, in fact it directs us, to presenting legislation as to enable us to put in place laws, regulations, agreements, protocols that must be followed. If we do not pass enabling legislation, the public watching this debate would say that we have good ideas but how. The legislation is intended to establish that how process. If we are to discuss this transportation of dangerous goods legislation, we have to think in terms of the effectiveness of the how in the enabling.

• (1740)

The fourth word is “amend”. We are talking about amending what? Again, I bring it back to what I said a moment ago. I do not want to preach an aura of paranoia, but in one where there is consistency, that we want some improvement. So we amend certain definitions in order to identify the obligations that will be imposed on individuals, on institutions and on corporate interests. If the legislation does not address the issue of amending certain items then it cannot be complete legislation.

Finally, the fifth word is “clarification”. Again, clarifying what is already there. So we are talking about clarifying an act to ensure that the applications of the rules surrounding the transportation of dangerous goods around the country, province to province, across the border, north to south, follows a particular protocol and that the protocol is enforced with uniformity throughout the entire country. There is a genuine and firm expectation by all Canadians that the rules will apply no matter where in the country those goods are being transported.

I know that the parliamentary secretary also said this is a joint jurisdiction. It is one where we have entered into an agreement with the provinces and the territories to transport goods. We will have carriage of certain responsibilities as we go along with the federal government having, for want of a better word, more exclusive responsibilities for air travel. But whenever we have goods that are moving from one area to another, and here I agree with the parliamentary secretary, we need to think about the one example which is very close to home for me, which was the Mississauga derailment in 1979. He is right. One quarter of a million people who had to be relocated, displaced, in order to address the issues that came forward out of that derailment are things that we should foresee, that we should anticipate, and that we should be prepared to put in action. What that requires is an emergency response plan and it has to be one that is consistent.

What I think I see in the legislation and what we will want to see as we examine it not just in debate and second reading but as this legislation moves its way through the system and goes on to second reading is an emergency response assistance program. A moment ago I gave an indication of five main themes and I will go back to those in a moment, but an emergency response plan must have the following items.

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It has to give us an indication of anyone who is shipping the product, any corporation. We want to know exactly what actions those shippers would recommend or would take in the event of an accident. So we would want people to be proactive. We would want people to think in terms of what could go wrong, so that they could take those initiatives to correct it. If they are thinking in those terms, then they take the preventive measures up front. The legislation will be examined by our party with that in mind, that the emergency response action plan be already present by the shippers and in detail, so that we can have an indication that the problem has already been anticipated.

Second, what those shippers would do to assist local authorities in the event of an action that, they have already foreseen and attempted to prevent, would occur in any event. What action would they take post-accident? That plan would be very specific. It would include, for example, a third item. One might say the third item would seem to be common sense, why would we have to put it in legislation? Why would we have to legislate that an emergency response action plan actually have these details? Because apparently not everyone is abiding by the same rules.

● (1745)

That third item would be a detailed list of all the dangerous goods. Heaven forbid that we would have a derailment of a train or an accident involving a tractor trailer, or worse, and not know what is on board. We could end up having train derailments, as we have had in the last several years under the government's watch, and some of the toxic substances have polluted rivers and lakes and destroyed the ecosystems in the areas where the accidents occurred in some measure because there was no detailed plan of the types of toxic substances that were being transported.

The fourth item that we would demand, and that I think is resident in this legislation and it should be, and everyone who is watching this debate would want to know that an emergency response action plan would have this, would ask, what does the shipper suggest are its capabilities as a responder to an accident? What are its capabilities to address the problem? More specifically, what type of personnel, expertise, are the shippers prepared to put on the site immediately upon the occurrence of said accident? In other words, what can they contribute to the solution of a problem that emanated from their shipment?

Fifth, they must have the technology. One thing is having the personnel with the expertise, who would have been trained, and who would have been appropriately directed to the transport of these dangerous goods, but the second is the kind of technology that they would bring to bear on the scene of the accident in order to address the spillage of these dangerous goods, these toxic substances, and what that technology would be designed to do. In other words, nobody goes into any kind of transportation of dangerous goods without knowing exactly what the solutions would be if there were an accident.

Finally, they would have to have a system in place for communicating what to do, how to do it, and with whom. How to advise the local communities, the local authorities, the local jurisdictions, how to bring the local expertise to play in those environments.

We would expect that that would not happen just in terms of the transportation of goods, material goods and toxic substances, but we would expect that such plans would be in place and we expect that this legislation would foresee such plans for security risks.

I noted that one of the members from another of the opposition parties, a moment ago, was concerned that we might be a little bit too invasive in terms of training or requiring training of personnel here in Canada if we put in a standard that had to be commensurate with another country. From my perspective, the most important issue is to make sure that we have qualified people to handle these products. As the parliamentary secretary indicated, there are over, I think he said, 30 million shipments of dangerous goods currently taking place in the country, 30 million per year.

One might stop and think for a moment, if that many shipments are going through our territory, then we are putting the population at great risk. Not to play on words, but at the risk of descending into the paranoia that I was accusing the parliamentary secretary of perhaps engendering, this would be a cause for concern if we did not have the appropriate emergency response action plan that was detailed and appropriate, both in terms of personnel and in terms of the technology required to address it.

As I said, we to make sure that we have a system in place. I introduced the word "enable", and the legislation would have to "enable" the establishment of an appropriate system, codified in regulations that would require that these dangerous goods be tracked during transport, that there would not be a moment where we would not know where those goods were. In other words, we would not accept, we would not tolerate that they would be lost, even for but a brief moment, a brief few minutes or more than that.

● (1750)

Second, when I talked about enabling, we would use security measures and interim orders to ensure that there would be compliance that would be in accordance with the Public Safety Act and other legislation designed to protect the livelihood and lives of individual Canadians and the communities in which they live.

Finally, in that enabling, we would have the development of a program that requires transportation security so that all of our shippers as well as the transport companies would be absolutely diligent in establishing a protocol that would ensure and guarantee the security of the movement of those goods. The obligations we would impose on the shippers would transfer themselves onto the transport agencies and companies that would move the products. We would not be any less diligent with them than we would be with those that actually send the product out.

I will repeat those five words again for everyone so that the legislation, at least from our party, will be examined in terms of those five words. First, reinforcement of the existing system because we want to illustrate that Canadians are not in danger at this moment. We want to improve what we think is a good system. Second, we would require security training and screening for all personnel who are handling and transporting these dangerous goods. Third, the regulations that would flow from this would be enabled by this legislation in order to have security throughout the entire country. Fourth, we would amend the definitions inherent in the legislation, especially with importers and defining the shippers who have the authority to move these products across the country. I think that amending those definitions gives us a clearer handle on the companies, products and associated security protocols that move product around the country. Finally, as I said earlier on, the clarification that this is legislation that is going to be applied throughout the entire country and, as a result, will be uniform in its application and its demands for all shippers and transport companies.

The Liberal Party is committed, as it has been since the inception under its watch of a study in 2002 that expanded in 2004, to come up with those five basic principles that I outlined through those five words as well as the six basic principles under an emergency response action plan that has served Canadians well to this point. We hope this will improve the legislation in order to serve them better as we go forward. We have been very much a part of that ongoing process and have, as the official opposition, been diligent in promoting the interests of Canadians and protecting their security. We want to be very helpful.

In our helpfulness on this very serious matter, we want to bring this legislation over to the next level of the parliamentary process, which is the committee system. From there, we hope to scrutinize it in the context of these items I have just outlined. If it were to pass that test, we would want to do it and do it quickly.

Yes, we are concerned that we would be compliant with all expectations of the world as it comes to Canada and, more particularly, British Columbia and Vancouver for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. I do not think we owe ourselves any less. We want to be in a world where the rest of the globe sees us as prepared, not only athletically and financially but also in terms of security.

● (1755)

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former Liberal government was famous for initiating ideas but many times it had difficulty bringing them to fruition. I am glad our government will be taking something, which will be very good for the safety of Canadians, and actually putting it into law. I also am glad to hear that the member is tentatively supporting the legislation.

I must say that in the past Parliament he and I served on the transportation committee together where we did a lot of good work, and he had a lot to do with that. There was a significant degree of consensus on the work that we did. In fact, I think he is probably more Conservative than he is prepared to admit.

One of the studies on which we had a great degree of consensus, which was related somewhat to the bill we have before us today, was rail safety. As members know, we had a number of very high profile derailments across Canada, some cases leading to the degradation of

wildlife and fisheries resources, some cases leading to the loss of life and other cases leading to significant disruption of communities, and we were able to come up with some consensus recommendations in our rail study.

How does the member see the work that we did on the rail study as complementing the work that we are now doing on the transportation of dangerous goods, which is before us today as Bill C-9.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I have several observations. Without jest, the member's compliments in my personal regard are doing me great damage because most people think of me as a capital L Liberal. I think he is probably wishing that I were a small c conservative but I am too close to the individual beside me, who is wearing a bright red tie, to even suggest that I would, in a moment of blushing, ever turn blue.

The member did say one thing that is really important and it is a compliment that I will accept on behalf of all parliamentarians. He said that parliamentarians in committee can actually work toward a very positive end. He made allusions to the fact that the committee on transport dealt with those issues related to rail safety, and they are very much a part of this legislation.

He may be right that the Liberal government that preceded his put all the good ideas on the table that everybody who has the public interest in mind should have co-operated and effected, but that Liberal government of that day was not gifted with the same kind of opposition as the current government. In other words, the current government has an official opposition that is working toward the public interest rather than partisan interests. I hope we will continue to work for the public interest.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if my Liberal colleague is more of a Conservative than he is a Liberal. When I watch them voting for this budget, I can no longer tell who is Conservative and who is Liberal.

I sit with that member on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. We both care deeply about defending our constituents who are on the roads every day, and we want them to be as safe as possible. Can he give some examples of hazardous materials transportation in his riding that we need to focus on as soon as possible?

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank my hon. colleague. Someone told me a few hours ago that I agree with my Bloc colleague so often that I could become an advocate for provincial interests. Perhaps I should move to Quebec and become a Bloc Québécois member? No, never.

The member points out that problems exist across Canada. There are no problems in my riding, but Highway 401 may have some problems. This bill would therefore ensure greater safety for the people who live near that highway.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to enter this Conservative-Liberal debate. I have heard that the problem with Liberals is that they never do what they say they will do and the problem with the Conservatives is that they always do what they say they will do.

On a serious note, my colleague mentioned security. In 2005, his Liberal Party entered into the security and prosperity partnership discussions with the United States. The security part of that had extra parliamentary discussions that avoided this chamber, where executive level discussions were between the Canadian and American officials who harmonized the status between the two countries.

I heard the parliamentary secretary use the word “harmonize”, and that has Canadian workers very concerned. What harmonization means is that the Canadian government has refused to stand up to support the constitutional and charter rights of workers in this country and, instead, has allowed the American government to dictate all sorts of invasive violations of Canadians' privacy rights in this country, like giving biometric information, criminal record checks, fingerprints and the checking of spouses. This is information that must be given to the American government which is then free to share that information with all sorts of governments in the world, including many that do not respect human rights and privacy.

I would like to know from the member whether he has considered the effect of the security and prosperity partnership and the damaging effect that will have on Canadian workers in terms of his comments and views upon the bill.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I would not want the member from the NDP to confuse the fact that I am willing to cooperate for the benefit of Canadians at large with any kind of approval of any of the plans that he ascribes to the Conservative Party. Far be it from that.

As well, he will have to accept that I disagree with his definition of harmonization and his inferences that come from his own definition of harmonization.

I would not want to get into a discussion on the floor of the House right now because we probably will not have as much time for the debate as he would like, but the question about whether the executive branches of two governments can have discussions that go outside of Parliament prior to any legislation that is presented in Parliament is a notion perhaps for political scientists to debate, and he might refer to them. However, as far as I am concerned, the security of Canadians always trumps virtually everything else.

In my own province, we had at one time a very heated debate about whether we would have surveillance cameras at stop signs and red lights, but that debate, while it seemed to be raging intensely for a while, has now turned into one where everybody has accepted the presence of security video cameras. Now, virtually every parking lot, every taxi, every elevator and every store has one. I am wondering whether the hon. member thinks that is an intrusion of privacy or whether that is an enhancement in security.

● (1805)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am hardly able to deal with some of the complexities, but the question of security cameras is somewhat different.

Would my hon. colleague not agree that the question of providing information to a foreign country where that information can be shared with other countries around the world is simply not the same level of comparison? When he uses that comparison, he is really not talking about what is at stake within the bill.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I suppose we disagree. When we are talking about a principle, we are talking about the transfer of the principle, we are not talking about the technology associated with validating the principle. I think it works the other way around.

Technology may support the principle, as opposed to building a principle on the basis of the application of technology. I think he is wrong and I am sure that, as the debate proceeds, he will find that the error of his ways will be corrected by very enthusiastic members in the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to speak to Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992.

First of all, and I will repeat this throughout my speech, it is important to understand that the transportation of dangerous goods is a jurisdiction shared by the provinces and Ottawa. We will support Bill C-9 in principle because, at this stage, that would allow the bill to be sent directly to committee. Then it could be debated and witnessed and perhaps even representatives of the Government of Quebec could be called in order to ensure, once again, that this bill does not meddle in provincial jurisdictions.

The Bloc Québécois continues to be the most ardent defender of Quebecers' interests. The first thing that we will ensure in this House is that the bill respects provincial areas of jurisdiction. It is important to us that Quebec's jurisdictions be respected. Thus, we have examined Bill C-9 with an open mind and with great consideration for provincial jurisdictions.

I would like to read the summary, provided when all bills are introduced. It gives a good overview of the content of the bill. I will then expand on that.

The summary states:

This enactment amends the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992, in order to enhance public safety—the safety of human life and health and of property and the environment.

The main amendments fall into two categories: new security requirements and safety amendments. These amendments include the following:

- (a) requirements for security plans and security training;
- (b) a requirement that prescribed persons must hold transportation security clearances to transport dangerous goods, and the establishment of regulatory authority in relation to appeals and reviews of any decision in respect of those clearances;
- (c) the creation of a choice of instruments—regulations, security measures and interim orders—to govern security in relation to dangerous goods;
- (d) the use of industry emergency response assistance plans approved by Transport Canada to respond to an actual or apprehended release of dangerous goods during their transportation;

Government Orders

The major new element concerns the notorious emergency response assistance plans that the industry should be tabling and that Industry Canada will approve so we can respond to the release of dangerous goods during transport.

(e) the establishment of regulatory authority to require that dangerous goods be tracked during transport or reported if lost or stolen;

(f) clarification of the Act to ensure that it is applicable uniformly throughout Canada, including to local works and undertakings;

They are saying that it will apply uniformly across the country. So it is important that this takes place in a way that respects provincial jurisdictions. We must ensure that the Quebec government is an integral part of each of the bill's planning stages and that it can confirm that it is willing to amend its own legislation to adapt to this legislation.

(g) reinforcement and strengthening of the Emergency Response Assistance Plan Program; and

(h) authority for inspectors to inspect any place in which standardized means of containment are being manufactured, repaired or tested.

It refers to the authority to inspect any place, but we do not want new policies to be implemented that intervene in peoples' personal lives in every way possible. We have to pay attention to that when a new bill is introduced.

When we talk about modernizing a bill about the transportation of dangerous goods, we have to listen, look, read, interpret and get to the bottom of things. It is important because things change and evolve. There are many dangerous goods and we are relying more heavily on nuclear technology, even in the medical field.

● (1810)

We must be careful. This freight, waste or residue is shipped to landfill sites. There is one in my riding that just never stops growing. It belonged to four municipalities. Initially, there was an objective: it would be administered by an inter-municipal board. Now the municipalities have decided to hand the management over to the private sector. The site keeps on growing and now the locals no longer know what is being trucked in there. My riding is crisscrossed with roads full of trucks that bring waste to this site. I hope that a bill like this can make carriers reveal their contents and can find a way to know let people know what is going past their homes on the way to the landfill. Similar examples to mine could be given from a number of different ridings in Quebec and in Canada. Highways that pass through Quebec lead to the Maritimes and Ontario.

According to everything we read, hear and see in the media, it is important to be able to tell people what is passing by their homes, and what is being shipped by truck, train, ship or plane. If there are dangerous goods, it must be ensured that there is a real way of containing and shipping them, whether it is waste or material to be used in a manufacturing process.

It is time this legislation was brought up to date. In the amended legislation, the safe shipping of dangerous goods would remain a shared responsibility, between the Government of Canada, Quebec, the provinces, the territories and industry. Within a framework of agreements, the provinces and territories would continue, in conjunction with Transport Canada, to enforce the requirements relating to the shipping of dangerous goods by road. We must be careful. We pass regulations, but who will be responsible for enforcement?

I take pride in saying that in recent years the Government of Quebec, under the good governance of the Parti Québécois, was able to set up a system of inspection and checking of all vehicles travelling through on the highway system. This entire system, once again paid for by the taxpayers of Quebec, ensures safety. It is important that another inspection system not be set up. If one were set up across Canada, in provinces and territories that might not have the means to do it themselves, the Government of Quebec would have to be compensated for the funds it has invested into highway safety. We do not want duplication or a new network or a new system of inspectors. It is understandable that we would want that.

If there were any chance representatives of the Government of Quebec would appear in committee, we could hear confirmation that everything is being respected. We are in the process of establishing a bill that could respect provincial jurisdictions and require full compensation for services provided directly by the provinces.

The act and its associated regulations are enforced directly by federal inspectors designated under the act, and by provincial and territorial inspectors. When offences are identified, immediate corrective or enforcement action is taken. This could include fines, prosecution or both. Enforcement responsibility would not change with the proposed amendments to the act.

A series of infractions is being added. When an emergency response assistance plan approved by Transport Canada is required, if the industry does not respect that or does not provide such a plan, we must be able to implement a system of offences, corrective action and penalties.

● (1815)

This could go as far as judicial proceedings. We cannot establish an entire system to monitor the transportation of dangerous goods without also including mechanisms to penalize those who break the law. If we did that, as we all know, this bill would be doomed to failure.

It is important to understand that all carriers would need to submit an emergency response assistance plan to Transport Canada before shipping dangerous substances. , Once again, anyone who transports such substances must submit an emergency response assistance plan. That is important. In committee, it will be important to ensure that shippers from outside Canada, for instance from the United States, who cross our borders, would also be required to have this emergency response assistance plan. Thus, it is important to ensure not only that this procedure applies to our domestic shippers, but also that those who transport goods and enter from the United States, for instance, are subject to this legislation.

Government Orders

The emergency response assistance plan outlines actions the shipper would take should an accident occur, and how it would assist local authorities. Emergency response assistance plans must include detailed information, such as a list of the dangerous goods being transported, a description of the shipper's emergency response capabilities, a list of specialized equipment available for use at the emergency site, a list of qualified persons available to advise and assist at the scene, and the communications systems expected to be used.

Of course, the location of an accident cannot be predicted, but it is important to understand that the individual who undertakes to transport the goods must ensure that, at all times throughout the journey, rapid intervention with suitable equipment, if necessary, is possible, and that local authorities can be contacted immediately.

Plans would be required only for substances that are potentially most harmful—certain explosives, toxic gases and flammable substances—and that may pose a widespread threat in the event of an incident. The revised legislation would require that ERAPs also be submitted to cover security incidents.

The committee will have to discuss which substances qualify as potentially most harmful. We need a definition that is consistent with the public's expectations. As I explained earlier, if we want to go forward with this bill and create any kind of framework for the transportation of dangerous goods, we have to ensure that the word “dangerous” is consistent with what our communities and our people expect. There is a reason we have this kind of bill. As I was saying before, in print and electronic media, we see things that happen around the world, and we do not want them to happen here. So, when we are trying to define “substances that are potentially most harmful”, we have to agree on a definition that is consistent with the public's expectations.

The proposed amendments include reinforcing the existing emergency response assistance program, which requires emergency response assistance plans to be in place should incidents occur involving dangerous goods. Assistance plans mean having everything in place to ensure assistance, as well as a financial plan to help communities. Personnel working with dangerous goods would require security training and screening.

Naturally, if we decide to pass this bill, to require companies to submit plans and to ensure that staff working for these businesses and who are in contact with these goods have the necessary training, we will also have to conduct screenings. We were speaking earlier of the transportation of explosives and toxic gases. For that reason, we must screen individuals working with these materials while respecting personal rights. The Bloc Québécois has always been a staunch defender of personal rights. We must ensure that such processes comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Once again, only the Bloc Québécois rises every day to defend the rights and freedoms of Quebecers.

● (1820)

Third, it will establish regulations requiring dangerous goods to be tracked during transport and incidents to be reported if goods are lost or stolen. Regulations must be established in order to ensure that any accident would be automatically reported, which is not the case at

present. In reading the summary of the bill, it becomes evident that reporting of incidents is not mandatory at this time. That is worrisome given that all manner of goods are being transported on our roads.

There is the use of security measures and interim orders, in accordance with the Public Safety Act and other legislation. We have to be careful when we talk about interim orders. Such powers are usually given to the minister or other representatives, and they must be clearly defined. There must be no secret as to what they are. Too often, the Conservatives bring in legislation, but there is no transparency. Even though they campaigned on transparency the first time they were elected, I noticed that the Conservatives were no longer talking about transparency during the most recent election campaign. Clearly, they were too embarrassed to mention it. The first time around, people did not know them, but after a year and a half, people knew that transparency was not the Conservatives' strong suit. We have to make sure that if there are interim orders and the minister is given special powers, the general public can know what those powers are, what happened and why.

Then there is the development of a program requiring a transportation security clearance to transport dangerous goods and the change in the definition of importer to specify who, in Canada, is subject to the requirements of the act and regulations with regard to the importing of dangerous goods. As I said, importers need to be made accountable, but so do the people who distribute the goods, who bring them across the border from the United States.

As I said, the Bloc Québécois supports this bill in principle, but feels that Transport Canada should continue conducting extensive consultations to make sure that the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces are respected.

Clearly, we would like Transport Canada to come before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and report on the hearings held across Canada on this issue, in order to make sure that all partners—governments, companies, carriers—were consulted.

It must be understood that this is a process of modernization. For some companies, having an emergency response plan is a major responsibility. We need to ensure that the industry can support it. If ever there were a problem, we need to see that there is help in place to ensure that companies are able to implement the complete system. What is needed is not only a bill and a series of fines, telling ourselves that if companies do not do this or do not comply there will be criminal proceedings. Yes, we can always send all the CEOs to jail, but that will not be great for the employment situation in our communities.

We need to ensure that our companies are able to cope with the bill. Therefore, they will have to be called before the committee to find out if they are ready, if the people involved in carrying dangerous goods are informed, and if they have been properly consulted. For our part, we will have to ensure that we have the right information and that they are prepared to cooperate fully with the government. We will also have to ensure that the provinces and territories are well aware of the situation, that there is a full inspection system in place, and that the ones that have inspectors in place already will be able to do the job. Compensation would need to be provided if any additional work were required by this bill.

The federal government must ensure that, while it may have to provide the network of inspectors in certain areas, it can compensate the provinces that have their own network and are capable of doing the work. Too often the federal government does this, for example with the Criminal Code. Certain cities are required to have a police service that enforces the Criminal Code. The cities are given more work but are not compensated for it.

We obviously do not want that to happen with this bill. There is a chance that carriers in Quebec could be required to obtain security certificates. Interprovincial carriers need to be aware of that and if ever the expenses were out of the ordinary, a program would be needed to compensate them.

So, we agree in principle, as long as Quebec's jurisdiction is respected. We will ask the necessary questions in committee.

• (1825)

[English]

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. He is a member of the transportation committee and of course is very concerned with these issues around hazardous goods, as am I.

In Canada and in this bill, we are not really looking at any changes to the very well-developed and world-recognized Canadian standards for the handling of hazardous or dangerous goods. The issues we are really looking at here are security clearances and the need for security plans around the movement of goods.

The nub of the question comes down to whether the bill will carry forward security clearances that are required for international truckers across the border, versus security clearances that would apply to Canadians and Quebecers who may be travelling between Sherbrooke and Montreal.

In this bill, the level and the dividing point for the security clearance requirement that the minister would be able to enact with this legislation are not clear. It may be that this legislation would cause problems for Quebec if it affected local carriers, with the rather onerous requirements for security clearance that the Americans are asking for.

Has my hon. colleague considered these issues?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat the last paragraph of what I was saying earlier because I have the text here in front of me. As I said, there is a chance that carriers in Quebec and

the other provinces could be required to obtain security certificates for interprovincial transportation.

My colleague is absolutely right. We have to be very vigilant. When the Conservatives use the word "clearance" and they are the ones deciding who gets certificates, we know how they operate. They invade people's privacy, and that could put the entire transportation network at risk, so we have to be careful, and we will be vigilant on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have seven minutes left for questions and comments when this bill comes back to the House for further debate.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1830)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE BOARD

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to take part in this adjournment debate, which will give us an opportunity to shed light on a situation I condemned last week in this House.

More and more, immigration lawyers in Quebec are reporting that they are having difficulty proceeding in French before the Immigration and Refugee Board. This situation has been dragging on for several months and reached a head recently when a lawyer was denied the right to proceed in French.

He was denied that right even though he had complied with procedure by giving five days' notice as required by law, even though the board member was francophone, even though the hearing was taking place in Quebec and even though the lawyer was proceeding in French at his client's request.

In this House, I asked the minister whether he intended to take action. He consulted his officials and spoke to us again in committee this week. Today, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration unanimously condemned this situation, which is completely unacceptable.

It was a unanimous decision. There is not agreement, however, as to whether the government can and must act. The minister told us in committee that he could not intervene directly in a board member's ruling, since it is a quasi-judicial proceeding. The board member therefore plays the same role as a judge. I am not kidding.

However, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration act as interested parties in such cases. The government can therefore do something by instructing government representatives to encourage the use of French and accept French as the language of work.

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In the case before us, Mr. Handfield from Montreal asked, on behalf of his client, to proceed in French. The documentation produced by the agency was in English, and it is the agency that approaches the board. The agency therefore could easily say that it has no objection to proceeding in French, that it will translate all the documents and that it will also ask to proceed in French.

That is my question for the parliamentary secretary today. Are those the instructions that the government gives its officials? I am not talking about the board members, who, I realize, are independent.

Are officials instructed to give their consent to proceed in French when counsel so requests?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to thank the hon. member for his intervention. I share with him the commitment to ensure that the Official Languages Act is respected by all government bodies, but I must acknowledge that it would be inappropriate for the government to comment on this current case, as it is currently before the Immigration and Refugee Board. As the member knows, the IRB operates independently of government.

As the immigration minister has said, the government obviously expects all agencies and boards, including the IRB, to operate in full compliance with the letter and the spirit of the Official Languages Act and the charter in allowing individuals to be represented in the language of their choice.

As the member knows and acknowledges, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration unanimously passed a motion earlier today speaking against the decision of the IRB not to allow an applicant to proceed in the official language of his choice. All four parties concurred.

Also, as the member knows, this case is under investigation by the official languages commissioner. Every year the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada renders more than 50,000 decisions. I can assure the House that it is required to do so in a manner that is consistent with the charter and in a manner that is consistent with the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada is required to respect the right of everyone who appears before it to use either official language. This means that every person appearing before the board has the right to choose the official language of his or her choice.

The position of our government is very clear. We expect and anticipate that all agencies and boards, including the IRB, will operate in full compliance with the letter and spirit of the Official Languages Act and the charter in allowing individuals to be represented in the language of their choice.

Certain cases have attracted media attention. As I have said, it would be inappropriate for the government to comment on such specifics. It is worth noting again that this case is currently being investigated by the official languages commissioner, and I would further note that the board has asked for final submissions from all parties on this matter.

Our government is working cooperatively with the Government of Quebec to make our immigration system work well and serve the unique needs of the Province of Quebec. That is why we support the Canada-Quebec accord, which allows the province of Quebec to determine its own immigration needs with federal funding assistance.

Our government will always support the rights of Canadians in Quebec and in other provinces and territories to relate to the government and its independent agencies in the official language of their choice.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my question again but perhaps I can be more specific. Naturally, I realize that the department does not give instructions to the members of the board. It would be ill-advised and would constitute interference.

However, what about the officials who are interested parties. I do not wish to refer to a specific case. Suppose that the Border Services Agency issues an inadmissibility report. Are the department's instructions to accept the request to change the language of proceedings to French or, on the contrary, to refuse the request? There are two parties before the Board. The government is one of the two parties.

What instructions are given by the department in the matter of language? That is where it can intervene. I want to know what its instructions are.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the concern, the effort and the work that the member opposite has done, especially at committee. I want to touch on that, because it is important to recognize here that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is getting off to what I think is a pretty good start. It is not a bad example, actually, of how we here in Ottawa need to work a lot more closely with each other in these very difficult economic times.

As vice-chair of the committee, the member put forward a motion that would seek support for the individual to have the case heard, and it would certainly bring forward a perspective and a view as to what we thought of that decision from an all-party perspective.

That was passed unanimously. I think the answer to his question is—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to follow up on a question I asked the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. It came from a newspaper article where she was quoted, and she has never denied it, saying that she did not want to make EI too lucrative or pay people not to work. I see members on the government side are shocked at that. I can see in their faces that some members cannot believe she would say something like that, but she did. It is an appalling statement to make about the unemployed workers of Canada.

We have a lot of issues with EI, but one of the key ones right now is that EI is a very effective form of stimulus. Ian Lee, an economist and director of the MBA program at the Sprott School of Business, talked about a study that ranked the different types of stimuli. Out of tax cuts, infrastructure and the different types of stimuli, the most effective form would be employment insurance.

In today's Toronto *Star* is the headline, "Welfare 'stimulus' touted. Want bang for buck in economic package? Give the poor a hand..." The same goes for employment insurance. This is money goes to people who absolutely need it. The problem is they are not getting it. Not enough Canadians have access to it.

According to the Caledon Institute in 1976, 84% of unemployed Canadians could receive EI benefits, and I do not think anybody has ever disputed this. Now it is 44%. It is just not right.

On top of that, we have the disgrace of delays by Service Canada. It is not the fault of the wonderful employees of Service Canada that people do not get their benefits on time. I do not think anybody on the government side, particularly the minister, is standing up for people waiting for EI.

A number of members on this side are. The member for Madawaska—Restigouche raised a question in the House yesterday and spoke to this need. He said in a press release that the waiting period for receiving the first EI cheque had been increasing. He said that they were no longer talking about two weeks but more like seven to eight weeks. He added that some people had even waited 55 days or more before receiving their first EI benefit.

I spoke to him as the critic and he told me about a specific person who, I think he indicated, had contacted him on Facebook and had asked for help. My colleague and friend, the member for Madawaska—Restigouche, brought it to the floor of the House of Commons. Unfortunately, the answers are not particularly forthcoming. That is the concern we have on this side.

Employment insurance is an absolute necessity in these difficult times. There are so many things the government could do to improve it. It could have eliminated the two-week waiting period; it did not do it. It could have increased benefits; it did not do it. It would have equalized access for people who need assistance; it did not do it. It added five weeks at the end and that is small comfort to people who do not qualify at all.

The government needs to step up and represent the people who are losing their jobs through no fault of their own. It is not lucrative to be on employment insurance. Nobody wants to be on it at a fraction of

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his or her previous salary. I wish the government would not be so out of touch and insensitive to the needs of those workers.

• (1840)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate hearing the comments of the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. He raised some of these issues just a couple of nights ago. We addressed what we are doing with respect to EI in terms of extending benefits and other matters. I certainly appreciate the fact that although he sees some problems with it, he did vote for the budget implementation bill today. That bill will put into effect many of the positive measures with respect to the employment insurance program and the items we have set out in our economic action plan.

As I have already said, our government is very concerned with helping those who are worried or who are having trouble making ends meet. We recognize that they are worried about keeping their jobs. We understand that many are worried about being able to pay their mortgage. We know that many are worried about being able to care for their families. 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 of Human Resources and Skills Development has stated 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. I would ask the member to focus on those improvements.

In this regard, the member opposite will be comforted to know that not only he supported budget 2009, but there were others. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the support we have received for the very important measures contained in our economic action plan.

Here is what the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada had to say:

We are pleased to see measures that will support those Canadians most affected by the economic downturn by helping them to weather and recover from this economic storm. Measures such as personal tax relief and extended Employment Insurance benefits will put more money in their hands at this crucial time. The Canadian Skills and Transition Strategy is important to ensure that when Canada emerges from this recession, it has a skilled and knowledgeable workforce.

Here is what the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association had to say about our economic action plan:

CREA strongly supports.... The steps the government has taken to ensure unemployed Canadians have access to the EI benefits they need without increasing costs for employers.

The Forest Products Association of Canada said:

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The investments in worker training through EI, the extension of the EI work-sharing program and support to communities that have been affected by the economic downturn, are welcome initiatives that will help more Canadians keep their jobs and employers hold onto talented workers.

Our government understands that unemployed Canadians are worried about putting food on the table and finding work to keep their homes and provide for their families. We understand that. That is why through our economic action plan we will help over 400,000 people benefit from an additional five weeks of EI benefits. We will help 160,000 people, including long-tenured and older workers, get retrained to find a new job and to provide for their families. We will help create tens of thousands of new jobs while building and renovating the many homes for those most in need.

This government has heard the needs of Canadian workers and is going to deliver the protection they need to get through these difficult times.

• (1845)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I enjoy serving with my hon. colleague on the human resources committee. He mentioned that we are supporting the budget and that is very true, but he also has to understand that it is not a carte blanche endorsement of the budget. In fact, the day that our leader, the Leader of the Opposition and soon to be prime minister, indicated that he would provide grudging support for this, he said:

It [meaning the budget] extends EI benefits but fails to extend EI eligibility.... It doesn't go far enough to protect Canadians who have lost—or will lose—their jobs.... We will be watching like hawks to make sure the investments Canadians need

actually reach them. And should [the Prime Minister] fail to satisfy the expectations of Canadians, we will be ready to defeat him and lead in his place.

EI will be part of that discussion, I am sure, as we go forward. We want to see better treatment of Canadian workers who are losing their jobs. So far, we have not seen enough. It is going to have to get better really quickly.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for supporting our economic action plan and for voting in favour of our budget, which contains a number of enhancements to the EI program. Obviously, he felt those were something he could support because he did. What other reason would he have? I take his party's support for our economic action plan as a vote of confidence in our government and I welcome his support.

Through these measures we are acting to protect jobs. We are acting to create jobs. We are acting to protect and help the most vulnerable to get back on their feet. We have extended the period by five weeks. We have made provisions for older workers, for long-tenured workers. We have invested a significant amount of dollars for skills upgrading and retraining. We have done the kinds of things that people have asked us to do through broad consultation. That is what they want us to do. We will be there to help them during these difficult times. Once again, I thank the member for supporting us.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)

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