



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, May 13, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 13, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1400)

[English]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week is National Nursing Week. Nurses all over Canada are vital professionals and nursing associations will be celebrating the achievements of their colleagues through various events and activities.

Let me take this opportunity to commend nurses around Canada for their public service, their tireless work and their role on the front line of the health care system protecting Canadians, particularly the 54,000 nurses in my home province of Ontario.

This past Monday, led by long-term emergency room nurse, Kimberley Sweeney, I visited the Royal Victoria Hospital to meet and hear concerns of our nurses. As I handed out Timbits to the nurses who finished their 12 hour night shift, it is difficult not to admire these caring, compassionate Canadians who deal, on a daily basis, with packed waiting rooms of patients and, despite that, never flinch an eye.

Our nurses in Barrie are top notch and it makes me so proud to know that the nurses in our country have such integrity and are keeping our health care system functioning so well.

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### TASTE OF ASIA FESTIVAL

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome to Ottawa today the coordinators of the Taste of Asia Festival to be held in the town of Markham, Ontario June 26 to 29 of this year.

This year, 2009, marks the seventh anniversary of the Taste of Asia Festival and I have been very pleased over the years to lend my support and encouragement to this wonderful event. Many parliamentarians, past and present, have had the opportunity to share in the festival's cultural performances and activities, as well as some great cuisine, as have over 70,000 Canadians annually.

The Taste of Asia Festival is hosted by the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham, the town of Markham, the Association of Progressive Muslims of Ontario, and is aided by the Canadian Federation of Intercultural Friendship.

I recognize with thanks all the volunteers, sponsors and entertainments who make this event such a success and I applaud the organizing communities that give us all the opportunity to celebrate and share in the dynamic, diverse society that we Canadians are.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### PIOTR JELEN

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in April, Piotr Jelen, a resident of Rawdon in my riding, was inducted into the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame. He coached the Canadian competitive ski team for 25 years and is the force behind the gold medal won by Mélanie Turgeon, as well as the successes of numerous other Quebec skiers, including François Jodoin, Alain Villiard and Geneviève Simard.

A Pole by birth, Piotr has lived in Quebec since 1974 and has spoken of how warmly he was received by the people of Quebec. His love of skiing has not diminished, and he is back with the Quebec team this year, as active as ever. His greatest source of pride is that he has been able to help great athletes achieve great things without any major injuries disrupting their ability to live normal lives.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and everyone in Rawdon, my heartiest congratulations for this well deserved honour.

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[English]

### POVERTY

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I believe the stars are aligning for a poverty plan for Canada.

*Statements by Members*

This week I was in Halifax and Moncton for parliamentary hearings. We met hundreds of individuals who are struggling to keep people's heads above water in their communities. What they are looking for from us is leadership and a partnership.

Also, yesterday here the Canadian Council of Churches and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada hosted a forum on a sustainable economy that would include everyone. We see the religious right and left converging on calls for a real poverty plan. We need the same from our political parties.

We can come together around the dignity of the person, the common good, human solidarity and being good stewards for our planet. We can deliver for all the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter and a fair wage.

Ontario has just passed, unanimously, anti-poverty legislation. We need national leadership to harness the excellent work happening in several provinces.

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●(1405)

**ACTS OF HEROISM**

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week a near tragedy occurred in Winnipeg's Red River. A teenaged boy was racing friends over the Provencher Bridge when he mistakenly pole-vaulted into the dangerously cold river below. That boy landed on his back and bystanders thought the worst had happened.

That is when Faron Hall, a man who lives under the bridge, jumped into the fast-moving river. Hall says that it took several attempts to calm the boy, but he was able to pull him safely to shore.

Originally from the Dakota Tipi First Nation, Hall says he has been homeless for nearly seven years, but he downplayed his actions saying, "I don't think I'm a hero. I'm just a human being". Faron is certainly a hero. He showed a rare example of true selflessness by risking his own life to save another. On behalf of Winnipeggers and all Canadians, I thank him for his courage and compassion.

We can all learn a great deal from this man and his story. I ask the House to join me in applauding Faron Hall.

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**FOCUS ON YOUTH AWARDS**

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to rise today to congratulate the winners and honourees at the 20th annual Focus on Youth Awards held last night in Mount Pearl.

I have been privileged to be involved in these awards for many years, and am proud to be part of a community coming together in celebration of youth in Mount Pearl.

Erica Fitzgerald and Colin Rose were chosen as the Mount Pearl female and male youth of the year. Also honoured last night were Sydney Burton, Hannah Noseworthy, Adam Keating, the Mount Pearl Synchro Tier 2 Team, the 4th Mount Pearl Pathfinders, Amy Fifield, Ben Mercer, Chris Doyle, Stephen Holloway, the Mount Pearl Show Choir, the Mount Pearl Senior High Drama Club, the

O'Donel Jazz Band, and O'Donel "Back to the Eighties". Also Carol Ann Kelloway was honoured as the adult volunteer.

I am proud to count these individuals among my constituents and offer my heartiest congratulations to the winners and to all honourees.

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**G2P3**

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize three outstanding young students in my riding. Eboni Morgan, Essence Morgan and Mia Caschera are students Stouffville's Glad Park Public School, and are also known by their moniker G2P3, or Girls 2 the Power of Three.

Last Sunday they hosted a fundraising event for our local food bank that included competitions for teenagers, including basketball, skipping and hula-hooping. They arranged the prizes, the vendors, the music and along with their classmates, they baked a wide range of treats to be sold at the bake table. In total, the event raised over \$2,700, which will help support our local food bank.

My riding is an exceptional one. We are blessed with hard-working people from around the world. We are home to the Oak Ridge's Moraine and Rouge Valley. My farmers produce Canada's best potatoes, corn and cattle. We are home to Olympic heroes Eric Lamaze and Karen Coburn.

Ebony, Essence and Mia represent the next generation of Canadian leaders. They are an important part of why I am so proud to call Oak Ridges—Markham home.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**TEEN ROCK GROUP ACCOMPLISHMENT**

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, some secondary school students from the Fadette school in Saint-Hyacinthe have won the local finals in a young entrepreneurs competition, with their recording of an album by the band Rock 'n Ressources, titled "100% ados". They will now move on to represent the Saint-Hyacinthe school board at the Montérégie regional finals in June.

The students had to compose the lyrics and music for songs aimed at young people the same age as themselves about the things they care about. They then had to perform these numbers for a recording. They chose to send a positive message about friendship, perseverance and helping others that reflected their motivations and passions. Every single one of them discovered hidden talents, pushed their boundaries and experienced great pride in their accomplishments. I too am proud, because my granddaughter Tiffany was one of them.

My colleagues in the Bloc Québécois and I congratulate these young people on their initiative and wish them the best of luck at the next level of competition.

*Statements by Members*

• (1410)

[English]

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to give good news from Africa. Once again the Republic of South Africa has undergone a peaceful transfer of power through a free and fair election.

This past weekend I had the honour to represent Canada at the inauguration of President Jacob Zuma. South Africa has experienced tremendous upheaval in its history, from discrimination of its majority citizens and now to the building of a multiracial society.

South Africa will always remind the world of horrors of discrimination, but it will also remind the world of reconciliation, a tribute to the first democratically elected president, Nelson Mandela.

On behalf of the government and the people of Canada, I wish to extend our congratulations and best wishes to all South Africans on their march into the future as a truly democratic and multiracial society.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**JOANNIE ROCHETTE**

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on March 28, 2009, facing stiff competition, Canadian Joannie Rochette won the silver medal in the women's singles event at the International Skating Union's world figure skating championships in Los Angeles.

This is the first time a Canadian has won a medal in this event at the International Skating Union's world championships since 1988. I am proud to say that Joannie Rochette began skating with the Saint-Léonard figure skating club in my riding, Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Her silver medal is the culmination of years of determination, dedication and the desire to win. This young woman, who trains in Saint-Léonard, has inspired Canadians and sent a message to the whole world that she intends to win the gold medal for Canada at the Vancouver Olympics in 2010.

Congratulations to Joannie. We are behind her all the way.

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[English]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been 29 days since the Liberal leader said, “We will have to raise taxes”. He also said that he is a “tax and spend, Pearsonian Trudeau Liberal”.

For those Canadians who have been paying taxes in this country for as much as three and a half decades, we want to know which taxes he will raise. He gives us hints with his words on that too: “We've got to have popular, practical, believable policies that may include some form of carbon tax”. He also said, “I'm not going to

take a GST hike off the table”. Lately he has even risen in the House of Commons to say that he wants a “radically expensive EI plan that would force payroll taxes to rise”.

Could I trust him to clarify all of this in his own words by rising today and answering which taxes he will raise, by how much and who will have to pay?

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**SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH**

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this month is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. I had the honour of attending the launch in London this past Friday.

Violence against women humiliates and demeans women and often robs them of their hopes and dreams.

According to the YWCA, over 50% of Canadian women will experience violence at some point in their lives, the majority before they turn 25. Sadly, most women know their abusers.

In this current economic climate, abuse is on the rise. Women's shelters in London have seen an almost 80% increase in calls over last year, with 50% more files assigned to counsellors. In Calgary, a women's emergency shelter helpline had a 300% increase in calls from the previous year.

Sexual violence against women can and must be stopped. To put an end to this type of violence, women must be seen as equal. Equality has to start in the community, with our activists, police departments, service providers and neighbours all working together for a common goal. And it has to be supported by our federal government.

No woman should ever have to endure sexual violence—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, the Liberal brand is closely associated with tax hikes. The Liberal leader stated very clearly that his party would raise taxes.

The Canadian people are still waiting to hear the details of the Liberal leader's plans. To this day, their questions remain unanswered. Yet those questions are so basic. Which taxes would he raise? Who would be affected by the new taxes? How would he go about raising those taxes?

Bearing in mind that people are sick of Liberal tax hikes, when will he tell Canadians and Quebeckers the truth?

We think that Canadians have the right to know what to expect from this Liberal leader.

Does he not think so too?

*Oral Questions*

People want the truth, and they want it now.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**DRUMMONDVILLE VOLTIGEURS**

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, our local Quebec major junior hockey league team, the Drummondville Voltigeurs, made history on the ice at the Marcel Dionne Centre in front of a record-setting crowd yesterday by winning the President's Cup for the first time in 27 years. After weeks of intense work and tremendous effort, their determination paid off because this win gives them a chance to play for the Memorial Cup.

I would like to express our admiration and appreciation for what they have accomplished so far. Their achievement is a significant contribution to sport throughout the Drummondville region.

Let me say it one more time: the Voltigeurs are our heroes. I would just like to wish them the ultimate honour: leaving their mark on the trophy after the 11-day celebration of the 91st anniversary of the Memorial Cup.

Here's to the cup!

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[English]

**BRITISH COLUMBIA ELECTION**

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday British Columbians re-elected Premier Gordon Campbell and his B.C. Liberals to a third term.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus and myself, I would like to extend congratulations to Premier Campbell for a hard-fought and successful campaign.

I want to applaud British Columbians for having exercised their democratic rights and obligations. Congratulations are also in order for Carole James, leader of the NDP, and her team for a hard-fought campaign.

British Columbians have re-elected Premier Campbell to a historic third term, something rarely seen in B.C. political history.

Once again, British Columbia has experienced politics and democracy at their best. Congratulations.

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**FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS TAX CREDIT**

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government's economic action plan has taken a key step in assisting Canadians wishing to purchase a new home. A new first-time homebuyers' tax credit will save new homebuyers up to \$750 on the closing costs when buying a new home. This plan will now allow first-time homebuyers to withdraw \$25,000 from their retirement savings, \$50,000 for couples, to purchase or construct a new home.

Bonnie Begerich of the Calgary Real Estate Board and Ellen Baba of the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board have praised the tax credit for encouraging new homebuyers to enter the market. The Canadian

Real Estate Association and the Association of Regina Realtors are supporting this plan. This new program will help hard-working Canadian families.

While the Liberal leader is planning to raise the GST and impose a job-killing carbon tax, Canada's economic action plan is helping Canadians with one of life's most significant purchases. Conservatives are standing up for Canadian families who wish to better their lives.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the entire country is suffering the effects of a worsening economic crisis. Bankruptcies were up 60% in March. Unemployment is up 83% in Alberta and 68% in British Columbia. There are more people in western Canada than anywhere else in the country who paid into EI but cannot get benefits.

We have proposed a 360-hour national standard of eligibility for EI. Will the Prime Minister act on our proposals before the end of the parliamentary session?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, Canada has a very generous employment insurance system that we in fact enhanced in the most recent economic action plan. Over 80% of those who are paying into it are receiving benefits.

The fact of the matter is that this is very transparent. The Liberal leader wants to change long-standing Liberal policy, and we all know why he wants to do it. Having denounced the coalition, he now wants a proposal that he thinks can pull the coalition back together. It is simply another proposal to raise payroll taxes.

● (1420)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I had the government's record on unemployment, I would want to change the subject too.

However, this is not about my record; this is about the government's record. The Conservatives are the government. What does the government propose to do to fix the eligibility problems with EI? There are a lot of Canadians waiting for an answer.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all know the motivation of the Liberal leader in making such a proposal. Let us be clear what the proposal is. The proposal is that a Canadian could work 45 days and collect employment insurance for a year. That would be the system in every region in perpetuity.

That would do nothing for the economy or for the recession today. It is simply a completely unwise, unthought-out proposal to raise payroll taxes to the roof in perpetuity for workers and small business.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the Prime Minister say that to the 150,000 people who would be eligible under EI if our proposal went through.

[*Translation*]

Here is a concrete example. In Magog, 200 workers lost their jobs at Gurit Canada. Those employees did not all live in the same employment insurance region.

They all made the same contributions. They all lost their jobs at the same time. Yet they were not entitled to the same assistance.

So, I ask again, will the government change the employment insurance system—

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

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the system we have in place meets the needs of the market. When we go through a difficult period, like we are right now, the system responds accordingly; benefits are increased and eligibility is also increased. In our economic action plan, this government has already increased long-term benefits for workers.

[*English*]

If that leader wants to go out and tell Canadians that he thinks they should pay higher payroll taxes so that people can work 45 days and then collect EI for a year, every single year, in every single region of the country, we are ready to take him on.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to come and join us in the regions to see what is really happening on the ground.

Yesterday the Minister of National Defence did his best to evade the questions concerning the management of public funds within his department.

Upon examining the Auditor General's report more closely, there is cause for concern.

Not only did the department waste \$300 million because it failed to effectively monitor resource management, but there is no current information that specifies exactly what was achieved with the money that has already been spent. The minister has no control over his department. Why is that?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We are talking about money at the Department of National Defence that was not spent, that went back to the overall budget. It is not missing money like in the sponsorship scandal. It is money that actually was not spent.

As I said yesterday, this was never a problem during the hon. member's government because under his government the Department of National Defence was starved of resources. The men and

women in uniform had to beg and borrow. That is what happened under a Liberal government. We are funding the Canadian Forces fully.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Did I hear the word Schreiber, Mr. Speaker, or Elmer?

[*Translation*]

This is not Monopoly money; this is taxpayers' money.

[*English*]

The minister said yesterday that losing \$300 million was a nice problem and that it proved that he had enough money. The problem is that the Auditor General believes that his department's financial management and monitoring are a problem. Departmental officials do not even know where the money was spent. The minister has no control over his own department.

How much more money is he prepared to lose by his incompetence and still call that a nice problem?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, having met with the Auditor General, she fully understands that the Department of National Defence is working very closely with her department and with other departments to ensure that accounting practices are followed and improved.

I will quote from her report. It states that "National Defence has taken steps to strengthen financial management and control". I would add that for the fiscal year 2008-09, the Department of National Defence estimates that it will not lapse any funds.

Again, that was never a problem when the hon. member was part of the government because then his government took money away from National Defence. We are putting money into it.

\* \* \*

● (1425)

[*Translation*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has a truly abominable record as far as climate change is concerned. The report by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development tells us that the government has totally overestimated its greenhouse gas reductions, basing its false predictions on carbon capture, a technology that will not be perfected for some years yet. In the meantime, the Government of Quebec forges ahead with its carbon exchange.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his lack of environmental vision is a hindrance to the sustainable development of Quebec, when its purpose is merely to protect the interests of his buddies, the oil companies?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has no environmental plan, and does nothing but attack Alberta and the other industries of this county.

We are working in conjunction with the government of the United States to establish true systems for controlling greenhouse gas emissions in North America.

*Oral Questions*

We have solutions, while the Bloc seeks only to create division.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, wanting to make Quebec a country does not mean wanting the destruction of Canada. As for creating division in Canada, I will leave that to the Prime Minister, since he is managing that very well on his own.

President Obama has been very clear. He has chosen absolute targets, not intensity targets, for reducing American greenhouse gas emissions. Since the Prime Minister intends to have Canada take part in a North American greenhouse gas emission credit exchange system, what is he waiting for before putting absolute targets in place?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has a realistic and clear plan with achievable targets. This is what it is working toward, within an international, continental and national approach.

I would remind our colleagues that Quebec obtained \$350 million through a trust, when it had asked for only \$325 million. We sat down with Quebec and asked ourselves how that goal could be achieved. Their approach is territorial, and their objectives are ambitious. We salute them for it.

To say that we are hindering Quebec is an untruth. What we are doing is giving it a boost.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this government's record in environmental matters is an absolute disaster. The conservatives' strategy has not helped at all to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which have literally skyrocketed. Alberta's emissions have increased by 44% and those of Saskatchewan by 66%. Without Quebec, the overall results would be even more catastrophic.

In view of these results, will the Minister of the Environment acknowledge that we need a territorial approach so that those who have taken action, such as Quebec, do not pay for those who have dragged their feet?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is rather ironic. Others stand there and criticize, as my colleague has done for so long. But on this side we have taken action.

In the 2009 budget, \$1 billion was allocated to a green infrastructure fund in order to finance tangible projects that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

But what happened once again? The Bloc voted against it. That is shameful.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government's plan has been rejected by environmentalists, economists and all Quebecers. That is the reality.

The Minister of the Environment has to realize that the time lost by Canada in implementing measures to achieve the Kyoto protocol targets, under the Conservatives and the Liberals, will result in even greater costs.

Why is he refusing to follow Quebec's lead of adopting absolute targets and using 1990 as the reference year rather than always

opting for the same measures designed to spare major polluters? That is the reality.

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can say one thing: I am proud to be part of a government that recognized Quebec's efforts and transferred \$350 million by means of the trust so that Quebec could achieve its objectives.

Take a look at the budget and see what the Bloc voted against: \$400 million for clean energy, \$1.3 billion for the renovation and improvement of social housing—there was a consensus on that, \$81 million for decontamination of sites, \$407 million to be invested in VIA Rail and the implementation of a tax credit for home renovations. These are tangible projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions but they voted against them. That is shameful.

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● (1430)

[English]

**GENERAL MOTORS PENSION FUND**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, GM faces a pension shortfall of \$7 billion. The federal government is trying to pass the buck to Ontario and is saying that it has no jurisdiction in the area. The Minister of Industry drops the ball as quickly as he can and says that the government is not going to be on the hook for the pensions of GM workers. However, these workers, some of them in their seventies and eighties, have played by the rules, they have worked all their lives and they are worried that they might even lose the modest that they have at the end of the day.

Why will the Prime Minister not show some leadership here, step up to the plate and indicate that he and Canada will stand behind the workers' pensions?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the ministers are absolutely correct in observing that these pensions are under provincial jurisdiction.

At the same, the leader of the NDP should know that ourselves and the Government of Ontario, along with the Government of the United States, have been working on the restructuring issues at General Motors for some time. Those discussions go on. Obviously, what we are trying to do is ensure that we sustain a viable company in the long term and we continue to work on a solution to advance that objective.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PENSION PLANS**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the courts have allowed AbitibiBowater to shirk its obligations to its employee pension fund. This decision shows how fragile our pension system and pension plans are. This money needs to be there so that our seniors have sufficient income. But governments have given companies the right to stagger or even suspend their contributions. As a result, a number of pension funds are threatened.

When will the government take action to protect our retirees and their pensions?



*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since we came to power, we have taken a number of steps to help this country's retirees, including income splitting for pensioners. We have created the tax-free savings account to promote investment, and we have improved RRSPs. I could go on at length.

We are continuing to work to improve our pension system. We are discussing these problems with the provinces, which also have extensive jurisdiction over this issue.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the government will not act even when it is the law.

In December 2007, Parliament took action to protect Canadian pensions by adopting Bill C-12 to amend bankruptcy laws. Section 39(2) prioritizes unpaid pension contributions in the case of bankruptcy. Sections 44 and 131 ensures that the court cannot unilaterally overturn a collective agreement. Section 126 prohibits a court from sanctioning restructuring plans unless all unpaid wage claims and pension obligations have been met. It is the law but the government has refused to put it into force. Why?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, or should know, it is one thing to pass a law but it is another to have the regulations in place that will ensure the law can be implemented wisely and in the best interests of the people of Canada.

We are working as fast as we can on those regulations because we want to protect people in that situation, and we will do so with great alacrity.

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**NATIONAL REVENUE**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in her latest report, the Auditor General stated that Canadian taxpayers lost approximately \$90 million through the incompetence of the Conservative government.

Ms. Fraser estimates that Revenue Canada has taken a \$30 million hit every year since the Conservatives became government in interest payments that should not have been made.

Was the minister aware of this, was he simply blindsided by the report or was he simply incompetent?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the Income Tax Act, companies must pay tax instalments to the Canada Revenue Agency so that when year-end assessments are issued, much of the money has already come in.

That said, the Auditor General found that some people were overpaying their taxes to take advantage of a higher interest rate than the rate the banks usually offer. This is certainly an unacceptable anomaly, and we have already asked that corrective measures be taken so that it does not happen again.

•(1435)

[*English*]

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are tired of the financial bungling of the Conservative government, and non-answers do not enhance its image.

Under the Conservative government, some businesses have used loopholes to take advantage of higher government interest rates. However, if ordinary Canadians buy a government bond they only receive a measly 0.75%.

Will the minister take the responsibility seriously and take the necessary steps to close these loopholes?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we also find it unacceptable that some companies are paying the government more than they owe in order to benefit from higher interest.

The rate was 2% higher than what they get at the bank. We disagree with this practice. This is not the purpose of income tax, and we have already asked that corrective measures be taken.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Environment Commissioner confirmed that after three years, three ministers and three plans, on climate change the Conservatives are not credible on any level.

Their emission reductions have no rationale. They are not transparent. Emissions are way up. Worse, they are deliberating overstating reductions targets, which they know they cannot meet.

Given those conclusions, why will the Prime Minister not finally admit that he will not come anywhere close to meeting his reduction target of 49 megatonnes for our large industries by 2010?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich to hear from that side of the House that we are being judged on a piece of paper that the Liberals signed knowing fully that they could not deal with that and adhere to it. They had no plan to implement it nor execute it. They had no ability to fulfill the Kyoto protocol.

We have put together a plan that focuses on mitigating the use of fossil fuels with renewable energy in which we have put approximately \$7 billion since 2007, and focuses on fuel efficiency.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the so-called dialogue with the United States is turning to confrontation.

### Oral Questions

The natural resources minister lobbies to block progressive fossil fuel standards out of California instead of helping Canada compete and win in the race to the low carbon economy.

Today, the environment minister is busy finger-wagging and lecturing the United States on its own plan because he has none to present.

When will the government realize that when it comes to achieving Canada's green energy potential, the United States is not the bad guy and it is not our greatest threat? Our greatest threat continues to be Conservative incompetence.

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, although those are very pretty words, the reality is that the greatest threat—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The Minister of Natural Resources has the floor.

**Hon. Lisa Raitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Contrary to what the Liberals like to think on the other side of the House, the reality is the greatest threat to Canada's ability to be clean and green in the future is the fact that for 10 years they did nothing.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, international banks promised to buy back the non-bank commercial paper they had issued, in the event of a general market disruption. Fernand Perreault, former president and CEO of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, said that his organization had asked the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions repeatedly to declare such a disruption in order to force banks to respect their commitments, but to no avail.

How can the Minister of Finance explain that the Superintendent of Financial Institutions sat back and did nothing to help that organization recover the \$13 billion invested in commercial paper?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the facts of the situation that the member opposite is describing. If he is referring to the fact that the Caisse de dépôt in Quebec had some unfortunate investments in asset-backed commercial paper, that is regrettable and it is taking the loss that followed on those investments.

• (1440)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are simply saying that the superintendent should have responded to the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, which he did not do.

Furthermore, in October 2007, the former Quebec finance minister, Monique Jérôme-Forget, denounced Ottawa's failure to act. Unlike other countries, Canada refused to intervene to force banks to respect their commitments.

Did Ottawa refuse to intervene because the problem appeared to be limited to Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. The Superintendent of Financial Institutions deals in an even-handed way with our financial system in Canada with respect to the regulation of that system. Some institutions made some investments that were unwise. That is not the responsibility of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. That is the responsibility of those who made the decisions to make the investments and they must live with their decisions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FORESTRY INDUSTRY

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week it was Fraser Papers in Thurso, and now Kruger has announced the closure of three mills in Mauricie. That means another 750 jobs lost in Quebec's forestry industry this week in addition to the 25,000 jobs lost since 2005.

In light of this tragic situation, how can the government keep refusing to come up with a proper support plan that includes measures encouraging the use of wood in the construction of federal buildings, as the Bloc Québécois has proposed?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

We all know that the forestry industry across the country and in Quebec has been going through very hard times. That is why, together with my colleague, the Minister of Natural Resources, we set up the Canada-Quebec task team, which has been on the job for a number of weeks now and will submit its results to us.

I am sure that we will find solutions to get forestry-related economic activity up and running again.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have wasted too much time already, and they must act now to keep things from getting even worse. The auto industry will be getting over \$5 billion, and the Bloc Québécois has proposed that the government provide a similar amount to create credit options for the forestry industry immediately.

Will the government do that, or does it think that a job lost in Quebec is not as important as a job lost in Ontario?

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, they are only talking about what they want to talk about. For years, this country did not have a softwood lumber agreement with our American partners. Then our government got back \$4.5 billion, which was redistributed to the forestry industry. Quebec got \$1 billion of that money, which went to forestry companies.

*Oral Questions*

This is a market issue, and it is really unfortunate for all forestry workers. We are implementing measures to deal with the problem.

With 12,300 employees in Quebec, the auto industry is a major employer there. We have to compare apples to apples.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Native Women's Association recently released the latest edition of its Sisters in Spirit initiative. Sisters in Spirit has uncovered 520 cases of missing or murdered aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The United Nations has chastised Canada for its shameful lack of response. Their plight has been ignored long enough. It is time.

When will the government launch an independent, public, competent investigation into these missing or murdered aboriginal women and girls?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is fully aware that through Status of Women Canada and under this government's leadership, we have been funding Sisters in Spirit at \$5 million, \$1 million a year, that will end in 2010.

This program is focused on looking for the root causes of racialized and sexualized violence against aboriginal women. In fact, the number of women who have been identified as being lost is a direct result of the funding and the research that has been done by the Native Women's Association. I have met with Bev Jacobs on a regular basis. We are committed to developing Sisters in Spirit, too.

• (1445)

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Lisa Marie Young, Shannon Alexander, Maisy Odjick, Lisa Sheepskin, and Claudette Osborne, these are 5 of the over 500 missing or murdered aboriginal women or girls. There are issues of race, class and sexual prejudice. There are questions the families want answered and that all Canadians need answered.

I ask again, will the government launch a full, public and independent investigation?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do thank the hon. member for his very important question. Our condolences do go to the families. Again, I have met with Bev Jacobs, who is the president of the Native Women's Association, to discuss the next steps in Sisters in Spirit. I do want to commend her and all those for their courage in being a voice for those spirits who have been lost.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the construction season is well under way. Infrastructure funding has been approved for months, but nothing is happening. The Minister of National Revenue wants to put the blame for the delay on the

Government of Quebec. Quebec urgently needs to create employment.

Will the Conservatives acknowledge that they are the ones dragging their feet as far as infrastructure is concerned?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we are accelerating the infrastructure project and working with provinces and municipalities right across this country to make sure that happens.

We have actually reduced the application form to one page. That is how committed we are to making sure that we get these projects out. We are not going to miss the construction season.

We are getting the job done, no thanks to my hon. colleague. That individual did not help us along the way by voting for it. She voted against it, unfortunately.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** I think not, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of National Revenue has said, "The delay is not our fault. We are in a position to start tomorrow morning. Quebec just has to pick its projects so that we can move ahead together all over our province".

Is the Minister of National Revenue accusing the Government of Quebec, in the midst of an economic crisis, of not wanting to create work by launching infrastructure projects?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in our economic action plan we put in place some \$12 billion to support infrastructure projects just about everywhere in the country. What we want to see this spring is the whole country turning into a construction project. Agreements have been worked out with each province, Quebec included, and positive discussions continue with a view to seeing work start very soon. Some projects, moreover, are already under way.

\* \* \*

[English]

**GOODS AND SERVICES TAX**

**Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader has finally come up with a plan to help Canadians during this global recession: federal taxes must go up, we have to raise taxes. The Liberal leader believes Canadians are not paying enough taxes, and families and seniors should be forced to send more of their hard-earned money to him in Ottawa.

What is the first tax he will hike? The GST. To quote him, "I'm not going to take a GST hike off the table".

Could the government please comment on the Liberal leader's dated, discredited and dangerous tax plan hike?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the tax increase advocated by the Liberal leader would target the poorest in our society, and families and seniors. It would be the worst thing one could do in a global recession. Cutting the GST benefited all Canadians, even the one-third with incomes too low to pay income tax.

Lower taxes of course leave money in taxpayers' pockets, where it belongs. Investment helps small and large businesses. It would even make it cheaper for the member for Markham—Unionville to acquire that North American car—

• (1450)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

\* \* \*

**LOBSTER INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Atlantic lobster fishermen and their families are suffering through a perfect storm with a crisis in the lobster industry. Instead of solutions, instead of assistance, they get rhetoric from the government. The Atlantic premiers, the Quebec premier, and the Atlantic lobster fishermen and their organizations are asking the minister to stand in the House today and come up with a short-term solution to get them through this summer break.

Will she, today, announce that these fishermen and their families will have access to employment insurance based on their 2008 catches, yes or no?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the lower market demand, of course, is setting the price. It is not something that is within the government's control.

However, I can say that we have addressed the issue of access to credit, which is something that was identified when we carried out consultations prior to the budget. We have established a community adjustment fund, which would address industries and communities in need, and we have invested in a marketing program to promote Atlantic lobster.

We are supporting the lobster industry and we will be convening a meeting of all the stakeholders, but the member voted against the budget that was very beneficial to the industry.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the drop in prices in the lobster fisheries dates back to long before the announcement of some assistance plan on which we have no details.

It appears that certain provincial Conservative members do know the details, but the fishers are still waiting to be informed.

One gets the impression that this government intends to abandon them as they have the forest industry.

Will this Conservative government commit to financial compensation for the lobster fishers in order to ensure that the floor price per pound is high enough that they will have an income rather than losses?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the lower market demand, of course, is something that is affecting the price. That is not something within the government's control. However, what we can do is support the industry and marketing initiatives so that the price can come up.

As I said to the hon. member, we are there for the lobster industry. We have provided a lot of support to the entire fishing sector in the last budget, but the member, who has a harbour in his very own riding that is going to see the biggest retrofit ever, voted against the budget.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the two ministers from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean can boast all they like about the influence they have within the Conservative cabinet, but we can see that is simply not true. They made all kinds of promises during the election campaign, but we now know that was nothing but hot air. The reality is that Bagotville could lose 439 Squadron and they are doing nothing to stop it.

Which of the two infamous ministers will have the courage to stand up in this House and admit they are breaking their election promise and their commitment to the people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean? Which one?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as always, the Bloc Québécois member's accusation is completely false. The Conservative members from Quebec are always extremely supportive of the Canadian Forces. I cannot say the same of the member opposite.

Our government supports our Canadian Forces. We have the best armed forces in the world because this government provides them with the equipment, support and funding they need to maintain our Canadian Forces.

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as we can see, they do not have the courage.

The Minister of National Defence said yesterday that no decisions had been made concerning Bagotville. Yet we know there is a real possibility that 439 Squadron could disappear. The minister tells us this is just a hypothesis.

My question is simple. Can the minister tell us right now if that hypothesis is wrong, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has been clear, as have the ministers from that region. We have no intention of making such a decision.

Our ministers from that region are not Bloc members: when they say something, they can keep their word.

*Oral Questions*

•(1455)  
[English]

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on April 22 the unemployment minister informed the House and 3,000 anxious families that Service Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans would soon announce an income support program for fishers affected by severe ice conditions. Almost immediately however, the minister's own officials refuted her.

Since then I have asked nine questions in the House and have been told yes, Service Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will soon make an announcement.

Yesterday in committee, the deputy minister of fisheries had something else to say: Discussions have never taken place between these two departments.

What does the minister have to say to this House now?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a great opportunity to clarify this matter.

I did inform the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development that my office had a call regarding ice compensation and that I would check it out. I checked out the ice conditions with my department and the ice conditions are not unusual for this time of year. Many fishers are delayed by ice conditions in the spring.

However, what the hon. member is not telling the House is that he went out prior to asking me or the minister of HRSDC anything about ice conditions or ice compensation and promised compensation to his constituents. So, he has some explaining to do.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should not have taken the minister at her word when she said that there was going to be an ice compensation program and the program was going to be announced. She only said it in the House. Why would anyone take that seriously?

She is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans who said she would meet with fisheries organizations. She has not met with them.

We are going to bring every fisheries organization to Ottawa. We are asking the minister, will she meet with every fisheries organization from Quebec and Atlantic Canada to talk about the lobster crisis, or if she will not, will she give the keys to her department to someone who will?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify for the House again that the member did go out and make public statements that there would be ice compensation. Prior to that question in the House, he announced a fictitious program to his constituents. Now he cannot deliver and he is panicking.

\* \* \*

**SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is 25 years since the *Ocean Ranger* commission recommended a fully equipped search and rescue helicopter be stationed at the St. John's airport and we are still waiting. Now Labradorians have learned that

their search and rescue base will be empty for six weeks while the crew gets trained in Alberta.

The Minister of National Defence says it is not his problem. That is not acceptable to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, especially those who are now being asked to resume flying to work offshore after the tragedy two months ago.

When will the minister take responsibility and finally give the people of my province the search and rescue coverage that they need?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that they do have the coverage that they need when it comes to the placement of air assets. He should also know that when it comes to search and rescue, it is more than just helicopters. It also involves of course our ships, including our Coast Guard. These are constantly being assessed as operational by the Canadian Forces.

We are constantly faced with the challenges of a large, diverse region when it comes to Atlantic Canada, the Arctic and the west.

What I would take the opportunity to do is praise the work of the Canadian Forces, our SAR techs in particular. That search and rescue is among the best in the world.

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**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Farmers' Markets Canada will cease to exist if funding is not renewed this year. Thanks to federal help last year, this newly created organization was able to assist farmers markets right across the country. These markets help generate farm income and supply us with good quality food.

In my cross-Canada "Food for Thought" tour, the constant message I hear is that government needs to support local food initiatives as an important link in our food sovereignty.

I outlined my concern to the minister in my letter of December 19. No commitment was received.

I ask the minister today, will he commit to fund Farmers' Markets Canada in 2009 and when exactly will the money be available?

•(1500)

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course everyone wants a refund on the tour the member did.

We funded a study on farmers markets last year. We received that report from the farmers market association about 10 days ago. We are assessing it. We are looking at it. We are also asking for a plan as to how it would spend the money effectively. We want to support farmers. If the farmers market association can help, we will certainly be there for it.

*Points of Order*

I hope the NDP members support whatever budget brings that forward because they usually vote against those initiatives.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the environment and the economy, the Bloc is a slacker. It could have supported forestry workers affected by the crisis by voting for five additional weeks of employment insurance. It voted against this measure. It could have stimulated construction by supporting residential renovations under our economic action plan. It voted against it. It could support investments of billions of dollars in our municipal infrastructure, as the Union des municipalités du Québec has been doing in the Outaouais, but it voted against it.

Could my colleague, the Minister of Public Works, explain the economic action plan's benefits for Quebec?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in these times of crisis, we have made a commitment to stimulate the economy and protect our world. Those are the objectives of our economic action plan. We know that the Bloc voted against it. On this side of the House, the Conservative members and ministers are working with the Government of Quebec and the mayors of Quebec to make it work.

By voting against it, the Bloc has voted against the municipalities, against green infrastructure, against social housing, and against assistance for home renovations that could stimulate the economy. People have a government that takes action. Fortunately we are meeting the needs of our citizens.

\* \* \*

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, adding five weeks to the end of an EI claim is not enough.

An increasing number of my constituents come to see me pleading for help with their EI benefits. Many of these people have no food and risk having their heat, hydro and water turned off because they do not have enough hours to qualify for EI benefits.

When will the government create a national 360 hour standard of eligibility?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we are lucky enough as Canadians to have is an EI system that is both fair and generous. It responds to changing local market conditions.

Let us be clear about what the Liberals are asking for. They are asking for an increase in payroll taxes so that Canadians can work for 45 days and collect benefits for a year after that.

We want Canadians to work. We are helping them to do that with our economic action plan. Thanks to that plan they can receive more benefits than ever and training for the jobs of the future.

[Translation]

**COMPETITION FOR DISABLED ATHLETES**

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Défi sportif recently brought together 3,000 disabled athletes in Montreal. Despite the enormous success of this event, the government is refusing to provide the organization with the funding it needs. I asked the Minister of State for Sport a question about this last week, and he said that he had already supported Défi sportif. Yet the organization's funding committee is not satisfied with the attitude of the government, which is refusing to give it an additional \$25,000.

Will the minister change his mind and give Défi sportif the \$25,000 it has requested?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of State (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate le Défi sportif again. It brings together 3,000 disabled athletes from 15 countries and 900 volunteers. It does a great job.

We have given it \$75,000. I understand there are still funding pressures.

[Translation]

I am anxious to meet with the Défi sportif organizers and the Canadian Paralympic Committee to discuss this further.

\* \* \*

[English]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During question period, I distinctly heard, not only today but also yesterday, the Minister of Finance suggest that other people were driving certain other vehicles. I think he was making reference to the member for Markham—Unionville.

I am concerned about that because I do not think that the Minister of Finance himself has quite clarified the fact that he drove a Subaru convertible for a number of years.

I would like to ask if he could clarify whether the minister continues to drive that vehicle.

● (1505)

**The Speaker:** I am not sure this is a point of order. The minister wishes to rise to discuss his motor vehicle.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have nothing against Subarus or who owns Subarus, but I have never owned a Subaru.

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Speaker, because this did come out of question period, I want to make it absolutely clear whether in fact it was a Saab that he drove over a number of years. Does he still drive a Saab?

**The Speaker:** It sounds like a Saab story to me, but I do not think it is a point of order.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to six petitions.

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**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two reports to table today. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the standing committee meeting of the Secretaries of Delegations held in The Hague, Netherlands from March 28 to March 30, 2008.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the standing committee meeting of the Secretaries of Delegations held in Vilnius, Lithuania from April 4 to April 6, 2009.

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**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament regarding the main estimates.

## FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in relation to the Atlantic lobster fishery and the Canadian Centre for Fisheries Innovation.

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: the eighth report on the 2009-10 main estimates, vote 15 under Finance; the ninth report on chapter 7, "Detention and Removal of Individuals—Canada Border Services Agency", of the May 2008 report of the Auditor General of Canada; and the 10th report on chapter 1, "Management of Fees in Selected Departments and Agencies", of the May 2008 report of the Auditor General of Canada.

● (1510)

*[Translation]***CRIMINAL CODE**

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-384, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (right to die with dignity).

She said: Mr. Speaker, the time has come for this Parliament to find a way to decriminalize medical assistance in dying, which is of such vital importance to those whose suffering can no longer be relieved except by this ultimate compassion.

In recent years, the parliaments of three countries in the European Union, as well as two states in the U.S., have enacted legislation which allows physicians under certain circumstances—the express request of terminally ill patients being one of them—to help certain persons die.

Serious research into the application of this legislation and their very specific criteria clearly shows that the greatest fear expressed in this Parliament some years ago, abuses and the hypothetical slippery slope, has not in any way become reality. A remarkable progression has taken place in public opinion concerning the need for such a law. Increasingly, people believe that they should have the right to choose, when the time comes.

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

\* \* \*

*[English]***CRIMINAL CODE**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-385, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (computer virus programs).

She said: Mr. Speaker, my bill, which is also known as anti-cyber attack, would change section 342.2 of the Criminal Code so as to clarify that the creation, sale and possession of a computer virus program for the purpose of committing a computer offence or mischief is an offence in Canadian law.

*[Translation]*

Cyber attacks constitute a real threat to Canadian security, Canadian businesses and Canadians' privacy.

*[English]*

Cyber attacks are offences against the confidentiality, integrity and availability of computer data and computer systems or networks. In other words, we are talking about hacking, spreading bought computer viruses and denial of service attacks.

*[Translation]*

Canada lags behind all of the members of the G8 as far as our legal recourses are concerned.

*[English]*

Canadian law enforcement organizations have been calling for this kind of legislation and my bill would fill the gaps in the Criminal Code.

*Routine Proceedings*

My bill also takes into account the concerns of the telecommunications industry that recommended that any legislation dealing with cyber attacks make clear that criminal intent is necessary and my bill includes just a provision.

[*Translation*]

I hope that all hon. members in this House will support this bill, and I also hope that it will be discussed in second and third readings, in committee, and at report stage.

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

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[*English*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all parties and I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That, during the debate on May 14, 2009, on the Business of Supply pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its members for speeches or for questions and answers, provided that, in the case of questions and answers, the minister's answer approximately reflect the time taken by the question, and provided that, in the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allocated may speak one after the other.

• (1515)

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. government House leader have to unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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**PETITIONS****ABORTION**

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition sent to me by hundreds of people from the Toronto, Ontario area concerning abortion.

The petitioners want to draw to the attention of Parliament that Canada is a country that respects human rights and includes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which entails that everyone has the right to life. They also point out that it has been over 40 years, since May 14, 1969, when Parliament changed the law to permit abortion and since January 28, 1988, Canada has no law to protect the lives of the unborn child.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death.

**CIVIL AIR NAVIGATION SYSTEM**

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition on behalf of

the residents of South Surrey, other parts of Surrey, White Rock, Richmond, Vancouver and Langley related to the NAV CANADA and the Canada civil air navigation system.

The petitioners are seeking greater input into the decision-making process as it relates to air space changes. I call the attention of the House to the fact that they are calling upon the federal government to revisit the legislative framework of NAV CANADA to ensure that proper consultation takes place with affected communities and residents before air space changes are commenced.

[*Translation*]

**ANIMAL WELFARE**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition in favour of the adoption of a universal declaration on animal welfare.

[*English*]

I present this petition on behalf of all of the people who have signed this, the World Society for the Protection of Animals in my riding.

**SRI LANKA**

**Hon. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that was put together by a constituent of mine who works very hard and has a great deal of concern about the ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka.

It calls on the government to pay particular attention and to put in place a process that would see a speedy end to the crisis there.

I thank my constituent for the hard work that was put into this petition. I see signatures that were gathered from all over the Lower Mainland. Our government is listening to the principles behind this petition and we are taking action.

**ISRAEL**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present three petitions.

The first petition is from students in east Vancouver at the Stratford Hall International Baccalaureate World School. They have collected signatures drawing attention to the fact that the Canadian government should actively support a UN war crime investigation on the Israeli air strike against the UN school that took place January 6, 2009, and the further strike against the UN headquarters and the use of white phosphorous in densely populated civilian areas of Gaza.

They call upon the House of Commons to support a war crime investigation against these Israeli air strikes.

The second petition has been collected by residents in Toronto who are connected with the Women in Solidarity with Palestine and the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network. They draw attention to the fact that the Canadian government has failed to condemn Israel's clear violation of international law and war crimes in Gaza.

They urge the Government of Canada to immediately undertake a change in its position regarding the Middle East and to initiate concrete action to hold Israel accountable for its ongoing violations of international and humanitarian law.



## INCOME TAX

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is signed by residents in east Vancouver who are concerned about the need for fair tax treatment to small retailers.

They request Parliament to change the tax laws to allow small and medium sized businesses to compete on a more level playing field with large retail cooperatives, such as Mountain Equipment Coop, and specifically request that Parliament change the tax laws that allow cooperatives to avoid paying corporate income tax through patronage dividends paid out as non-cash sales.

• (1520)

## DARFUR

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present a petition regarding the ongoing humanitarian abuses that are taking place in Darfur. I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of Canadians for Action in Darfur.

Since 2003, over 400,000 people have been killed and millions have been displaced. Atrocities like this should not take place. As a peacekeeping nation, it is our responsibility to take the lead in the abolishment of the despair, kidnapping and death currently plaguing this region.

I am proud to present this petition to the government with the hope that the government will encourage and participate in all necessary measures to end this crisis once and for all.

## COALITION GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to present, on behalf of my constituents from Vegreville—Wainwright, a petition which notes that the Conservative government was elected with a strengthened mandate to govern this country through the economic crisis; that the opposition are looking to impose an unstable, unelected coalition of Liberal, NDP and separatists; and that Canadians have the democratic right to choose their government and not to have a surprise prime minister chosen through an unseemly and undemocratic backroom deal.

The petitioners, therefore, call upon this House to oppose any political arrangement that would replace Her Majesty's democratically elected government without first consulting Canadians through a democratic election.

## CBC NORTH COUNTRY

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to stand in this House as the member of Parliament for Churchill representing northern Manitoba. I stand here to present petitions signed by hundreds of northern Manitobans, people from Thompson, Flin-Flon, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, The Pas, Mosakahiken Cree Nation, Herb Lake Landing, Easterville, Mathias Colomb Cree Nation, as well as people from northern Saskatchewan.

These northern Manitobans are voicing their opposition to the possible closure of the only radio station in northern Manitoba based in Thompson, CBC North Country. CBC North Country has had an illustrious 30 year history. If CBC North Country closes, the north and most of Manitoba will lose its voice and the chance to share important news, community events and important weather information.

## Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada fulfill its duty and provide necessary support for the CBC, Canada's public broadcaster. They call on the government to ensure that CBC North Country continues to be there for northern Manitobans.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from residents of Don Valley West and other parts of the greater Toronto area in support of the universal declaration of animal welfare. They petition the government to be a signatory to that document. It reminds us that animals provide both livelihood for many Canadians and people around the world, as well as companionship.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 2, 103, 104 and 105 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House that Questions Nos. 2, 103, 104 and 105 be made orders for return?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2—**Hon. Shawn Murphy:**

With regard to federal spending, how much financial support, both capital and otherwise, was given to individual airports over the last three fiscal years (2005-2006, 2006-2007, 2007-2008) in each federal riding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 103—**Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With regard to the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation: (a) what is the financial commitment for the current fiscal year to combat the spread of the Mountain Pine Beetle, and what department is responsible for the expenditure; and (b) from the \$200 million invested by the government in the Mountain Pine Beetle Program, what is the breakdown of the money spent by (i) the Department of Natural Resources, (ii) the Department of Transport, (iii) the Department of Western Economic Diversification?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 104—**Mr. Claude Gravelle:**

What was the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Nickel Belt, listing each department or agency, initiative, and amount by fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*

**Question No. 105—Ms. Megan Leslie:**

With regards to the disposal of surplus federal property in the Greater Halifax Area: (a) how many federal properties have been designated as surplus properties since 1999; (b) for what reasons were the properties determined as surplus; (c) which properties have been designated as routine; (d) which properties have been designated as strategic; (e) when were those designations declared; (f) were any properties changed from a routine designation to a strategic designation and, if so, what was the reason for the change in designation, and when did the change in designation occur; (g) what was the market value for each of the surplus properties; (h) what was the purchase price of each disposal property that was successfully transferred; (i) who conducted the independent third party appraisals of each property; (j) which properties, if any, were transferred under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI); (k) which properties, if any, are currently in the process of transfer through SFRPHI; and (l) how many homelessness related community service providers have tendered bids on disposal properties?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT ACT**

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, An Act to amend certain Acts that relate to the environment and to enact provisions respecting the enforcement of certain Acts that relate to the environment, be read the third time and passed.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a real privilege to speak to Bill C-16. It is an issue close to my heart and the hearts of many Canadians.

The bill amends nine environmental bills, and it creates a new act. It builds on the work the Liberal Party did in 1995 on the environmental damages fund. I want to thank the Liberal critic for the hard work he has done in trying to move these issues forward in the House.

The march to extinction is something all of us are aware of. It receives short attention in the House, but we have never seen this rate of increase in the destruction and elimination of our species in the history of our planet. The cause of it is human activity. Seven billion people on our planet are having an indelible impression on our world. Some of it is good; some of it is bad. Between 8 million

and 14 million species exist on our planet today, and the rate of extinction in those species is truly frightening.

This bill creates increased penalties for violators. It forces violators to not only pay fines but to also pay money to repair the damage they have done. It is a welcome change. We, in the Liberal Party, support the bill moving forward to committee to strengthen it and make it even better.

This bill is good but it flies in the face of actions by the government, which have been extraordinary. Many members on the other side do not know that the government has been removing critical funding to various species programs that have been established by some of the finest scientists in Environment Canada and NGOs across our country. The Conservative government has been eviscerating programs that are critical to the protection of habitat and species.

I will provide some hard facts and numbers. The national wildlife area protection program protects critical habitat. What did the Conservative government do? It carved off \$2 million, a huge chunk of its funds.

The budget for the migratory bird program, which monitors the health of bird populations, was cut by 50%. This is at a time when the change in bird populations has been truly frightening. I am going to get to that later on. There has been a massive reduction in bird populations in Canada, and many of the birds that migrate from points south to the Arctic make a stopover on our territory. The government has been eviscerating programs necessary for monitoring their activities.

The Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network analyzes the health of ecosystems. It is incredibly important. The government cut an astonishing 80% of its funds, for heaven's sake. I ask that the environment minister put that money back for these programs. If the government cares about biodiversity in Canada and cares about our environment, I ask that it put the money back.

This happened in the face of the red list that was done by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The IUCN is a body that started in 1943. It has over 11,000 scientists around the world, and it does the most comprehensive assessment of biodiversity on our planet. In fact, the IUCN started the World Wildlife Fund. It is the premier organization that interacts with and integrates environmental groups, NGOs, and government bodies all over the world.

The International Conservation Caucus Foundation was very happy to host Julia Marton-Lefèvre, who is the director general of the IUCN, earlier this week. She eloquently spoke to government members, government ministries and members of the ICCF, telling us about the catastrophe that has befallen the species of our planet. She is asking that Canada be a leader in this area.

The Liberal Party's former environment minister, who is here today, did an extraordinary job in his work internationally. He is a member of the ICCF, and he is making incredible contributions here in the House and internationally based on his extraordinary and unparalleled experience. The government would be wise to listen to the former minister of the environment in these areas. There are many things it can do.

*Government Orders*

I will outline some of the problems we have right now.

• (1525)

What is the unprecedented rate of increase in extinction that I mentioned? According to IUCN, 44,837 species have been assessed and 38% are threatened with extinction. There are 22% of all mammal species and 31% of all amphibians that are threatened with extinction. That is a very important group; I think this is the year of amphibians, if I am not mistaken.

Amphibians are very important because they are the proverbial canary in the mine shaft. They are amphibians in a mine shaft, if you will. They are so sensitive to our environment that when they go it is a harbinger of things to come. It is not good.

With respect to birds, 14% are threatened with extinction. Regarding warm water reef corals, the corals that build up reefs in warm waters, 27% are threatened with extinction. With respect to fish, 90% of the fish species we are harvesting right now are at the limit or beyond the limit of their carrying capacity. We are overfishing the earth's oceans.

What can be done? As I mentioned before, seven billion people on our planet are having an indelible effect. The IUCN and the WWF and others will tell us there is a basic principle we have to look at.

Integrated human activity and conservation can be done, but it requires an integrated approach. If we simply say we have to protect and conserve places without taking into consideration the needs of human populations, we do not preserve the areas we want to preserve. In fact, unless the areas generally have value to people, there is a much greater risk of those areas being destroyed.

The best bet is to ensure that those areas have value for people. Some areas have to be protected by not allowing any human activity. But most areas can be managed in a way that ensures the human environmental footprint and activities are minimal so there is a benefit to humans and a benefit to the areas that are important in terms of critical habitat.

CIDA has an enormous opportunity to do this. Personally, I have been to Africa 26 times. I have had a great opportunity to spend time at the KwaZulu-Natal Nature Conservation Service in South Africa

I am bringing that up for a reason. Back in the 1890s, the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa had the second-largest land mammal in the world, the great white rhino. Sixty of these animals were situated in one small area, in Umfolozi reserve in South Africa. The South African government said it was the custodian of this extraordinary species for the world and it had to preserve the rhinos' critical habitat. The government did that.

The government also recognized that if it was going to expand the numbers, it would have to expand habitat. So, the KwaZulu-Natal Conservation Service has expanded the habitat, and it has created conservancies. There is a benefit for people, but there is also a way to generate funds that can be shared for people in primary health and education and infrastructure, particularly for rural populations. There is also money to create and protect habitats, do scientific assessments, pay for game guards and expand and buy new territory to protect more habitat. There are lessons there for all of us.

The result, if I can use the example of the white rhino, is that now there are more than 18,000 rhinos. The population went from 60 to 18,000 in less than a century. It was an extraordinary act. The principle I am driving at is that we can do this.

CIDA does not get this. I do not understand why. They can, and they should, have a department in CIDA that could actually integrate conservation, environmental protection and human development. They could fit wonderfully together. To look at them as two separate parts is illogical, unworkable and ineffective. To combine them both would be very effective.

The Prime Minister should call on the relevant cabinet ministers, those involved in the environment, health and international development and have a working group to integrate these actions. The silo does not work. And I am going to get to some of those other principles later on.

• (1530)

Alanna Mitchell was also part of the international conservation caucus. She was a *Globe and Mail* reporter, who was named by Reuters as the top environment reporter in the world. As a Canadian, this was something to behold.

She has written a book called *Sea Sick*, in which she eloquently describes the effect of humans on our oceans. She made a very poignant point: if ocean life dies, life on the land will die too.

The reasons for this are complex, but part of the reason is global warming. When the temperature in the ocean rises, there is acidification that causes a change in the pH level. This change affects the living creatures in the ocean, resulting in a massive die-off. This causes a feedback mechanism where the rising temperature of the ocean reduces the ability of the living creatures to absorb carbon dioxide. We get this terrible feedback loop that we do not want.

As I said, the former environment minister, the former leader of my party, has fought hard for Canada to take a leadership role. He set extraordinary benchmarks for the world to follow. The Conservative government has dropped the ball. It is looking at intensity targets. The government has no concept, no plan whatsoever to deal with the Copenhagen conference that is going to take place at the end of this year.

The world climate conference is going to be held in Geneva, on August 31 to September 3. Canada should play a prominent role at this conference. We should also be going there with an effective plan of action to deal with this issue. It is not good, it is not effective, and it is irresponsible for the government to simply put its head in the sand and say that others will deal with it. That is not good enough. The government's failure to develop an effective program would be a huge act of irresponsibility towards the citizens of our country. The government should be listening to members of the Liberal caucus and other political parties who have great ideas and can help make Canada a leader in this area.

*Government Orders*

I want to talk about carbon sinks. We have to look at carbon sinks as areas with value. Take a forest, for example. We cut down the trees and those trees are sold. But those carbon sinks have value now. A hectare of tropical jungle, for example, will take out about 200 tonnes of carbon every year. If a value is put on carbon, at say \$10 a tonne, that is \$2,000 a hectare. That is a huge amount of money to a developing country. That money would convince the country not to cut down the trees in that jungle.

This is important, because the two great lungs of the world, in Amazonia and the Congo Basin, are being destroyed as we speak. Once they are destroyed, we cannot get them back. There is an urgency on this matter that I cannot overstate. The failure to deal with this now will affect the health of this planet for generations to come, and there is no going back.

Canada should take a leadership role in supporting the REDD program. The carbon sinks in the world have a value, and the REDD program convinces countries not to destroy what really belongs to all of us.

There was another innovative program, which took place in Cameroon. It has an area between two national parks that is crucial habitat. Cameroon is a poor country and it does not have the money to protect that habitat. But if that area is leased out, it could be protected and a larger area could be created that is crucially important for the migration of animals.

Canada should take a leadership role in convincing the international development community that part of the money for official development assistance should go into these programs. Areas could be preserved by leasing them at a small amount of money, thereby protecting critical habitat and preventing them from being destroyed. These areas are really part of a legacy for everyone around the world; they do not belong to one country. If we protect these areas, we protect the health of our planet.

I would also like to speak on the issue of trafficking. Most Canadians know about the trafficking in guns, drugs, people, alcohol and cigarettes that takes place in our country. What they probably do not know, and this is a shocking embarrassment, is that Canada is one of the top conduits in the world for trafficking in endangered species. It is true. Organized crime benefits from this illegal product.

• (1535)

We are a conduit of products, whether it is products from big cats, the various tiger species existing in Asia, our own bear gall bladders, bear paws, a host of different animal products, that are trafficked through Canada.

There is also an online trafficking process that takes place now. In fact, the International Fund for Animal Welfare did a great assessment of this and it was frightening. It took a look at 7,100 auctions taking place online for the trafficking and selling in endangered species products.

These were animal parts, as outlined in appendix I and appendix II. These animals are threatened with extinction. As I said before, appendix I lists at all the big cats species, such as the Bengal tiger, the Siberian tiger and the Sumerian tiger, which is down to 300. There has been a massive decrease in the Bengal tiger. All the various tiger subspecies are being destroyed.

Canada has the trafficking of bear products and other animal products, both large and small. Let us not forget reptiles and birds are trafficked illegally all over the world.

The government needs to take these issues seriously. It must look at working towards developing effective legislation to address the trafficking of these products on line. The failure to do this will contribute, and has contributed, to a massive change and effect on the ability of these animals to survive.

Part of the solution is to have robust domestic legislation, enforcement of that legislation and awareness. We can work with our partners in the NGO community and in others. We have a lot of extraordinary environmental groups in Canada. In fact, the International Conservation Caucus Foundation has hosted the IUCN, the WWF and Alanna Mitchell on the effect on our oceans, and we will host others. COSEWIC was here recently also.

The lack of attention the government has given to the environment is an abrogation of its responsibility to protect environment.

Another mismanagement on the part of the government is the Navigable Waters Protection Act. I do not know why the government attached changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act to the budget bill, Bill C-10. This has caused enormous concern among Canadians. It has nothing to do with the economy.

This is a various serious problem in my riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca. There are concerns about access, environmental protection, projects moved forward without any interest whatsoever on the effects those projects will be on our areas.

Right now we have a mega marina project proposed for the inner harbour in Victoria. In my view this project is a recipe for a human disaster. Without the proper assessments, the project will cause a safety hazard, which will potentially cause the death of Canadians.

Canada has an enormous opportunity. The march to extinction is occurring now. Our biodiversity is linked to our survival. Once this is gone, it will never come back.

If we fail to deal with this problem now, if we fail to integrate conservation and human development, if we fail to integrate economic interests and preservation, if we fail to take an international approach to protect the large carbon sinks in the world, if we fail to have an effective plan to deal with global warming, if we fail to protect the our areas of critical habitat, if we fail to do these things, then our species will be doomed too.

• (1540)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I understand an amendment was made at committee to allow private prosecutions under the act, probably because a number of the members did not trust the government to properly enforce the legislation.

If we allow private prosecutions, would that also impact on class action lawsuits? The member is probably aware that Quebec and Manitoba, and I think possibly B.C., have class action lawsuit legislation. Would there be any application of that type of approach and that type of legislation to this bill? If not, could there be?

*Government Orders*

• (1545)

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I am not a lawyer so I do not feel equipped to answer that complex legal question. I will ask my colleagues in our party who are lawyers. In fact, our environment critic is a lawyer, so I will ask him that question.

However, we are not sure whether the government will be able to enforce this. When it comes to our wildlife officers, the evisceration by the government of moneys for our wildlife officers has caused a huge problem. British Columbia had only one wildlife biologist enforcement officer for the southern half of Vancouver Island. How on earth can one officer deal with the complex issues and the large territory in half of Vancouver Island, such as poaching, the destruction of critical habitat that affects our salmon runs and excessive overfishing? It is absolutely impossible.

We implore the government to make a robust investment in our fisheries and wildlife officers. They are extraordinary people. They do a great job. The government needs to listen to them because they are on the ground and they know what goes on.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Conservative Party is not necessarily in a big hurry to enforce the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. The environment is not among its priorities. Recently, I was asked to replace a member of the committee that is currently studying the Species at Risk Act.

I would like to tell the member who just spoke that when the Liberal Party was in power, it did enforce this act. It revised it and provided money in the budget to protect wildlife, vegetation and aquatic and terrestrial species. But the Conservatives cut more than 50% of the funding for these programs, and they abolished some of them.

Did the government slash 50% of the funding for these programs and abolish some of them because this money was not being spent? Did that give the government of the time a surplus of \$12 billion a year?

[*English*]

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. I am glad he brought up many of the Liberal interventions, from the Species at Risk Act to the Law of the Sea, which we signed onto. My colleague, the former environment minister, hammered out international agreements for the environment. He managed to do something that no one else in the world has been able to do. The Liberal Party also put forward the environment damages fund.

However, this has been a chronic pattern with respect to the Conservative government. I ask the Conservatives to look in their hearts. They can promise things, but in good faith the Liberal Party worked closely with them to deal with a stimulus package and investment in various areas with the hope the government would roll out those funds. If those funds do not get on the ground to help projects, then they are useless.

We worked with the Conservatives to facilitate the process to ensure those funds would move through the House quickly to benefit Canadians. Yet last year 75% of the infrastructure funds for my province were simply not used. They have been sitting in the bank. This has been a chronic pattern.

I ask the Conservatives to put pressure on their ministers to get these moneys out, for the sake of our constituencies and, most important, for the sake of Canadians to help them in their time of need.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for putting into his presentation a whole series of issues related to the environment. I am especially happy that he was able to point out, for all hon. members in the House, the correlation between environmental issues, government inaction and the impact on the economy. I know he concentrated more than anything on biodiversity and bio-sustainability and the ability of mammalian and fish life to withstand the assault on the environment.

Since the hon. member touched on issues related to the economy and the government's inability to address environmental and economic issues together, I would like him to comment on something that is very current in his province of British Columbia. The black liquor in the pulp and paper industry, a great element of our forestry economy, is producing an environment where our companies are unable to compete with their American counterparts, which are receiving about 8¢ per litre of production in their pulp and paper enterprise.

As my hon. colleague knows, the use of this black liquor, which is a bio-product that is used for energy transferring in the pulp and paper industry, is being subsidized in the United States to the tune of 50¢ a gallon, or about \$90 million per typical pulp and paper production company.

Our companies cannot compete because our government has no incentive program to get our industries to become responsible in not only energy sustainability, but in an energy sustainable environment that diminishes CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and it makes our product much more competitive and environmentally sustainable. In fact, they attract private sector investment dollars in modernizing a huge element of the British Columbia economy, that is the forestry business and the pulp and paper business, and at the same time maintain the biodiversity environment for all our animal and fish life.

Could he comment on why the government refuses to provide the same kinds of incentives—

• (1550)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I was trying to get the hon. member's attention, but I do have to leave enough time for the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca to respond to the hon. member's questions and comments. I will allow him five seconds to finish, then we will go to the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member comment on the government's unwillingness or inability to engage in items that would encourage private sector development for—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is the failure on the part of the government to do what the member said in terms of incentivizing, in coming out with a plan that will incentivize the private sector to adopt green technology.

The private sector really wants to do this. Companies from Alberta to B.C. to Newfoundland are begging the government to work with them to develop those incentives. However, the government has a tin ear. It speaks to a lack of thoughts and ideas that the Conservative government is unable to produce. That is sad, because the ideas are out there. They are in the House of Commons right now. They are out there in the private sector. They are in the universities. The scientists have them. They have offered all manner of innovations, whether it is wind power, solar, geothermal or tidal. We have overcome many of the difficulties in tidal and wave power in which Canadians have taken leadership. These are the kinds of innovations we should be rolling out, if even only in pilot projects.

On the biofuel issue, the IPCC, the International Panel for Climate Change, has said that biofuels are becoming more and more a pariah. There may be some areas where it is useful, but in areas like corn, it is having a deleterious and devastating effect on our economy in so many ways.

I am sorry our time is up because there is much more to talk about.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, although I rise in support of this bill, I would like to take this opportunity to expand on some key points and concerns. We feel that Bill C-16, an act that relates to the environment and enacts provisions respecting the enforcement of certain acts that relate to the environment, is a step in the right direction. For this reason, we are supportive.

However, it should be noted that this act is still lacking in several areas. Hopefully we will see many more improvements to this act in the near future. I think it is ironic that the government has tabled the bill claiming that it is committed to enforcing environmental laws, given the fact that it has failed to live up to its Kyoto commitments. Furthermore, let us not forget that this is the very government that is busy gutting federal environmental laws in order to expedite its so-called stimulus package.

It has relaxed the very requirements and laws pertaining to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which could very well result in ecological impacts on some of our waterways. The Navigable Waters Act was gutted by the Conservatives during the 2009 budget and we think that is an exceptional shame. This underlines the fact that they have no long-term vision or real understanding of environmental issues. Improvements to be made include the need for enforceable regulations pertaining to greenhouse gases or for countless toxins and pollutants that are awaiting regulations under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act or the Fisheries Act.

Bill C-16 redefines penalties. However, the penalties are not increased for corporations. Under the bill, there is no jail time for corporations that break laws, yet it increases the financial toll and jail times for individuals. This is another example of how the government favours the big corporations. We saw that today with respect to the \$90 million, based on the Auditor General's report, where the businesses are basically using Canada Revenue as an

investment purpose as opposed to a way to pay their taxes. We think that is a shame.

The increases in individual punishments are, at times, five times those originally prescribed prior to Bill C-16. Yet the same adjustments are not made in relation to corporations. Basically, Bill C-16 amends eight different acts to create a uniform system of punishment. However, it is noted that these particular punishments are flawed. The impact on individuals has been increased dramatically, yet the punishments for corporations are basically inconsequential.

Most of us remember, in April 2008, the incident pertaining Syncrude Canada Ltd. and the impact on environmental issues that it created. Improvements—

**Mr. Greg Rickford:** What does that basically mean?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, the member across certainly has a lot to say, but let us see. They are the ones who have failed to act on the environmental impact.

We saw what it did to the wildlife when 1,600 migrating ducks flew into a toxic pond owned by Syncrude. The total amount fined to this company was approximately \$800,000, which was a very small amount for such a large company, given the negative impact their actions had on our wildlife and environment. There is very little incentive to encourage and ensure that corporations commit to environmental laws. For these companies, the few thousand dollars they have to pay out are a small price to pay when they choose to turn a blind eye to environmental laws.

What is required is a suitable method of policing corporate environmental offenders. Consideration should be given to increasing fines to approximately four times the current amount. This would mean that, for first offences, these companies would be hit with a much more forceful punishment. Imagine if those dollars were to be reinvested in protecting our environment.

As previously mentioned, we support this bill; however, it is with some reservation. No matter how many laws and policies the government puts in place, the impact will be minimal unless there is the political will to actually abide by and enforce those laws and policies.

● (1555)

I understand the member for Kenora has a lot of rhetoric to offer, across the board. Obviously this just goes to prove how much the Conservatives are not in tune with the environmental laws that need to be put in place.

On that note, although this bill provides additional tools to officers who will enforce this act, providing that the government ensures there is enough funding to have the appropriate number of enforcement officers employed, there is still a dire need for amendments to eight different acts to harmonize the penalties. This is long overdue.

*Government Orders*

The bill will require publication to shareholders and the general public of convictions under environmental law. It will not require publication of all violations, warnings, orders and tickets issued, all agreements and all charges. That is exactly what we need to put out there.

On that note, I think it is important to really recognize whether the government is actually committed to ensuring we have the proper environmental laws in place, given the fact that it basically gutted anything that had to do with Kyoto.

I can tell you that Domtar in Espanola had ensured they would be up to date with regard to the Kyoto targets. They invested all their money to make sure it was going to get done. They wanted to make sure that their company was going to be at the forefront on this. Basically, all the other companies are being told, "No, it is okay. You don't have to abide by it". I think it is a shame.

On that note, I am going to close. I would be glad to take any questions.

• (1600)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung, for presenting the New Democrat position on this bill.

This is obviously a bill that we feel has many positive aspects. However, we are quite concerned about the implementation, and very specifically, about the regulations.

I would ask that the member tell me a bit of her thoughts with respect to what kind of work Canada has done and what kind of reputation it holds on an international scale as a result of its complete disregard for the Kyoto protocol, as a result of pulling away from commitments it made internationally, and what that means for the work we need to be doing here.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Churchill, Manitoba, for her question. When the government decided not to follow through with the Kyoto targets, it had a great impact across the world as to whether Canada was actually committed.

No longer are we leaders with regard to environmental laws. We are seen as being quite weak. I think that is extremely important as to why the NDP chose to put forward its climate change bill once again, which actually would bring back those Kyoto targets.

So I would again like to thank my colleague for her question.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for an excellent presentation regarding Bill C-16. We are looking at a bill that is 193 pages long and is quite involved.

One area that I would like to question her about is the whole area of the enforcement officers and the training methods for these officers. We are concerned that the officers be highly trained in their jobs and therefore able to correctly implement the environmental practices.

Again we are concerned about the government's capacity and desire to enforce this act, once we go through the final processes and

pass it into law. Would the member comment on that particular issue of the enforcement officers?

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

During my speech I did talk about the enforcement part. Certainly the enforcement officers that we have out there right now are actually extremely well trained and can do the job. The problem is that there are not enough of them to do the job. Plus, we need to make sure that the laws that are put in place will actually do the job that needs to be done and give them the proper tools to enforce that.

Certainly there is a major problem with regard to ensuring that there are enough people there to take this on. As we have seen with regard to the tainted meat issue in the past, the government is not committed to enforcement.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a further question.

This bill would eliminate the power of the courts by establishing, under legislation, minimum and maximum penalties. For example, by making a maximum penalty of \$6 million, that is not a high enough penalty if a situation develops, such as an oil spill, where there could be a loss of \$100 million or more. The penalty in that case would only be \$6 million. That brings us into the whole issue of whether corporations should be let off the hook for what are essentially very small fines in relation to their overall revenues, as opposed to the heavier penalties that would be placed on individuals.

I wonder if the member would like to comment on that whole area and those two points.

• (1605)

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** Mr. Speaker, let us review some of the fine requirements under this bill.

The maximum fine for an individual under these new punishments would be \$1 million. This amount is a real sacrifice for an individual, not to mention the threat of jail time. Corporations can see offences of no more than \$10 million, even on continual offences. The financial sum is beyond harsh for an individual, but very weak for corporations.

For example, ExxonMobil made an estimated \$477 million in 2008. A punishment of \$10 million is not much more than the cost of doing business for such a corporation. ExxonMobil was forced to settle for approximately 75% of the \$507.5 million in damages it faced for the *Exxon Valdez* tanker spill, off the coast of Alaska. This amount of fine is something suitable for a massive corporation.

We have to look at the impact as well. Let us not forget about the impact on our wildlife and the length of time it takes to clean up a spill. It is going to be very important when these fines are levied that the money be reinvested in exactly what the fine was levied for. Basically, it needs to be reinvested into the environment.

**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?

*Government Orders*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.  
(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

**MARINE LIABILITY ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Marine Liability Act and the Federal Courts Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities)** moved that the bill as amended be concurred in.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.  
(Motion agreed to)

**The Deputy Speaker:** When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities)** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to begin the third reading debate of Bill C-7, the Marine Liability Act. Let me first begin by saying that this bill has found support among many members of the House and across all party lines. I would like to express my thanks to the critics from all parties in relation to moving this bill forward for the benefit of Canadians.

I was very pleased to see that we were able to work so productively at the transport committee phase and I hope that that spirit of cooperation and collaboration will continue here in the Chamber. I do believe it will. At committee, we heard concerns from the tourism industry and legal experts. In several cases, we moved to address those concerns and strengthen this bill to make it even more effective as a piece of legislation for the benefit of all Canadians.

Indeed, all parties understand that there is a need to move forward on this bill to provide this country with the most comprehensive liability and compensation regime while balancing the concerns of all impacted stakeholders. We heard that this will be of great benefit to the industry and will impact all stakeholders across the country. This bill will significantly modernize the Marine Liability Act and offer greater protection from the risks associated with marine transportation from coast to coast.

For example, this bill will do four major things. First, it will significantly increase compensation for Canadians from damages

caused by oil spills, which I am personally very excited about. I know that people across Canada are very interested in hearing more about that. Second, it will guarantee compensation for passengers on Canadian ships through compulsory insurance for shipowners. Third, it will recognize the commercial realities under which the marine adventure tourism sector must operate and make sure that the sector remains viable. We heard this from experts as well as people in the industry themselves. Finally, it will protect the interests of Canadian businesses that supply foreign ships that do not pay their bills through a form of lien, much like a builder's lien or a logger's lien.

Bill C-7 is the result of extensive consultations with stakeholders. I am pleased to inform the House that the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities also conducted its own thorough examination of the bill. The committee heard strong support from a number of stakeholders and experts in the areas of marine law and maritime transport. It made appropriate changes where indicated in the bill. The witnesses before the committee spoke of the balance that Bill C-7 needs to achieve by protecting the interests of the marine industry and of the Canadian public.

We heard loud and clear from witnesses that it was time for Canada to move forward with this type of legislation and for Canada to join the rest of the world in its move forward as well. As I said, the most exciting part is that this bill addresses the gaps in the liability and compensation regime for oil spills. As Bill C-7 is a priority for this government and would significantly advance maritime law in Canada, we are excited about its passage.

I would again like to thank and acknowledge the hard work of my colleagues on the committee. I hope that through continued collaboration on both sides of the House we will be able to move this bill forward without any further delay. Together, we can take one more step to modernize this important piece of legislation and protect Canadians for years to come.

I would like to thank the members of the committee one final time because it has been a very appropriate bill to push through in such a quick nature. Indeed, with their help, we will move it through the House.

● (1610)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak to Bill C-7. Before I begin, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary because we are in the mode of thanking and because it is the right thing to do, acknowledging the fact that parliamentarians from both sides of the House and indeed from all four parties worked collaboratively on putting forth legislation that is in the public's interest.

The parliamentary secretary wanted to talk about four things and he touched on them very quickly. During the second reading debate, I addressed some issues that I thought needed to be looked at in some detail in order to bring forward legislation that would be commensurate with the betterment of the Canadian citizen's interest with respect to the Marine Liability Act.



*Government Orders*

Some of those issues were touched in committee. When I say “some of those were touched”, it is because when we bring issues to the committee, the committee brings forward stakeholders and other witnesses, interested parties, individuals and experts in the field in order to illuminate the issue, so that members of Parliament can penetrate on matters in a much more significant way than their own preparation might allow them to do. Putting partisanship aside, that is in fact what happened in this case.

Yes, as the parliamentary secretary said, we did want to bring forward legislation that brought Canada into the same standards of international practice with respect both to marine liabilities, the carriage of goods and services, but primarily goods, and to make penalties for contravention of the act, especially when it related to environmental damage up to a standard that would provide a real penalty.

We did look at these things, and this particular legislation does increase the penalty amount, for example, on commercial or public purpose vessels carrying passengers to a per capita limit of about \$350,000 per passenger. We did not find much difficulty in that regard. We were more concerned about a series of other practices that are associated with, and may come as a result of, some of the activities that are conducted on a commercial basis.

To that end, we brought forward to the committee a variety of interested parties, including, for example, the Canadian Shipowners Association and International Ship-Owners Alliance of Canada.

Interestingly, they did not have a great deal to offer with respect to changes on a format that they thought only brought them forward to be competitive. I might say from a very personal point of view, I do not think that the punitive component of insurance and liabilities on the marine side was all that onerous for them, but it seemed to be consistent with the international practices that the rest of their competitors were operating under, and in fact did not diminish the protections that Canada, geographically, and Canadians on an individual human basis would suffer from.

We accepted their positions and it would appear that in many respects this legislation does make it easier for our own producers of services to compete in the international marketplace, but the committee was really looking at the issues of environmental degradation as a result of accidents in Canadian waters.

We noted, of course, that the *Exxon Valdez*, was probably the most serious of these shipwrecks that created untold damage that will carry on literally for decades, and cost enormous amounts of moneys, billions of dollars, in order to clean up and mitigate.

• (1615)

We did not address that sufficiently in my view. The changes that would have been required in order to get this bill through the House would probably have caused the bill to drag on and be delayed for an excessive period of time.

The committee made a decision that it would accept the limits that are proposed in the bill, such as they were, as sufficient movement forward in order to give all of those ship owners and carriers the opportunity to see that we are certainly much more serious than we were before because we have raised the limits, notwithstanding the fact that some might say that those limits are not enough.

We have delivered the message through this legislation so everyone understands that we want more due diligence. We want protocols put in place. The liabilities are going to be a lot more onerous than they have been in the past. Therefore, they need be able to up their insurance, or establish a care for the environment, a care for our shores, a care for our waters approach to doing business as they carry their products through our waters.

There was a series of amendments that did not come forward, but that reflected the interests that many Canadians from all parts of the country but in particular in our northern waters wanted us to address. They deal with not only the passage of vessels through their waters but the manufacturers of said vessels.

As we know and as we heard earlier on in the debate on environmental issues and protection of the environment, global warming is a fact of life that people are becoming more and more aware is not something that we are going to change overnight.

One of the effects of global warming is that the Northwest Passage, our northern waters, may become much more navigable not in the immediate future but in the future measured by the amount of time it takes to build some of these huge vessels, ocean-going carriers, as well as ice-breakers in order to allow countries like Chile, Russia, even the United States and other countries that see the advantage of going through our northern waters from a transportation point of view, in getting their goods to market.

Whether those markets be in Asia or in Europe, it would appear that our waters may provide all of those shippers with an opportunity to have a huge savings on the transportation cost side.

Some of the members from my own caucus brought forward some views at committee that addressed the issues of our aboriginal population in northern Canada and the protection of the environment in the northern parts of Canada.

Some of those views, while expressed at committee, have not found their way through amendments in this House, so I raise some of them today. I think some of my colleagues from the north, especially my colleague from Yukon, may take the opportunity to enumerate them as he addresses this issue at third reading. I look forward to hearing some of those expressions once again.

In addition to addressing the environmental impacts, which are not solely addressed by the insurance costs and the penalties that are going to be imposed through this legislation, in Canada and around the world, quite frankly, there is the issue of prevention, delivering the message that shippers need to use vessels that are seaworthy, crews that are appropriately prepared, trained and ready to utilize their vessels in a safe and efficient fashion as they go through our waters.

That is the essence of what this legislation aims to do. At least, from members of the Liberal caucus at committee, this is the focus of our issues on this legislation. The legislation, as we dealt with it at committee, did meet those concerns, and as a result we felt a certain level of comfort in supporting it, not just at second reading before it came to committee but at third reading as well, as we now find ourselves.

*Government Orders*

•(1620)

There is a series of other issues where we had concerns and we moved some amendments in this regard. I want to share them with you, Mr. Speaker, because I know that you are going to be interested in ensuring that members of Parliament do the work they need to do in committee to address the issues that Canadian citizens individually and collectively want to have addressed by their parliamentarians.

While the legislation addresses the issue of liability, insurance claims, appropriate funds at play and legislation to ensure that people abide by the contractual arrangements they have made as they operate in Canadian waters and on Canadian territory, it appeared to us in the Liberal caucus that we needed to reinforce at least two other measures. One of them is associated with non-compliance of contractual obligations and the practices of some of the shippers and the ship owners—sometimes they are not exactly the same individuals—and the liabilities they might or might not accept or forgo as they move in and out of Canadian waters.

When the member for Brampton West speaks to this later on, he will itemize the way the liens were dealt with in this legislation. It was our view that Canadians are put at a commercial disadvantage by the way that liens are treated in this legislation. I leave it for members to follow his discussion when he rises in the House in the not too distant future, probably before the end of today and if not today, then tomorrow. It will be most enlightening.

Let me point to the fact that the Canadian Bar Association, the national maritime law section, and the Canadian Maritime Law Association were impressed by the amendments the member brought forward and ones that he addressed on behalf of our caucus and parliamentarians with respect to the position that Canadian businesses would have relative to businesses originating in other places. Everything is very mobile on vessels on water and in Canadian ports. He focused, as we focused, on protecting Canadian business interests. His definitions and concerns were unfortunately not viewed with the same kind of appreciation by members of the government or the other opposition parties. However, they did accept that it was a view that was legitimate enough to be heard.

Interestingly, the Canadian Bar Association and Canadian Maritime Law Association felt that not only were the points made by my colleague from Brampton West absolutely apropos, and I hope they will accept this little jibe in a friendly fashion rather than in a negative malicious one, but in true lawyerly fashion they felt that it would not matter if they were not accepted because there were remedies in other courts. Canadian citizens are more interested in making sure that the law is much more specific rather than saying, “I can find remedies if I can get a lawyer who may be expert, who can find a judge and who will be prepared in his turn to hold the ship until I get my commercial interests addressed”.

At any rate, Mr. Speaker, those amendments were debated hotly in our committee. I say this because I know that you are interested in knowing that committees do not just receive things and rubber-stamp them, but they actually do their work. Those amendments did not go forward unfortunately, so we found ourselves in a position where we either accepted the bill in its totality and what it was designed to do, i.e., to generate greater protection for the Canadian environment,

greater protection for Canadian businesses and greater protection for Canadian citizens, either we were going to hold it up or start to move forward. We adopted an incremental approach, one that says we will bring our concerns forward, as we did in committee and as we will in the course of this debate, and at the same time accept the legislation for what it will be.

•(1625)

The second item that created some concern for us was the issue that I am sure other members will address but that the parliamentary secretary has already alluded to, and that is the issue of adventure tourism.

Representatives from Wilderness Tours as well as from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada talked in terms of the kinds of insurance that are not available to adventure tourism operators. In fact, adventure tourism operators find it impossible in some instances to get the appropriate insurance liabilities in place for them to operate. It is with some regret that I would say we have to accept what this bill is trying to do and what it concludes in doing, and that is, it eliminates their legal responsibility to their customers by essentially saying they no longer have to have insurance as long as they can get an informed consent and a waiver before a potential client engages in the activity.

There are some in this country who think that is okay because a consenting adult engaging in adventure tourism, which by its nature is highly risk-oriented, cannot really hold somebody else responsible if there is an accident or, God forbid, a death. The person's family or close ones would have no recourse to the courts for liabilities if the person had engaged in one of those activities.

Personally, I have a different view, but it is not the view that carried the day in committee. For me, it is an abrogation of a responsibility on the part of government to say that if someone agrees to take all of those risks, the operator will not be held responsible for anything. I realize that is a philosophical position and I am willing to accept that people have a different view, but I do not like it.

Where I think we have some serious challenges is in, at the same time, absolving operators who might operate without the appropriate preparation and training of their staff and without the appropriate publication of the risks associated with something other than adventure tourism, like whitewater rafting, et cetera, for passengers who are viewers or passive passengers in these kinds of activities, without any recourse at all. The operators would be entitled to be held safe harmless from any future litigation provided they give an indication, they publicize an indication or they verbally tell people that people who engage in that activity are taking their body and their life in their own hands and they absolve the operators of all liabilities.

One of the most compelling of the witnesses, a local individual, indicated that over the course of the last 20-some years, his operation had paid, I believe it was, in excess of \$1.2 million in premiums to insurance companies and the insurance companies, over that entire period of operation, had paid out a grand total of \$70,000 in claims.

*Government Orders*

There are probably a few reasons for that. One of them is that the individual operates in a safe environment. The other is that there are not that many accidents. A third one is that once there is a signed public waiver, the cost to pursue a legal action in court would grow exponentially, and a lot of people would make the decision not to pursue their claim in court because it would cost more to pursue the claim than what the claim would eventually get them.

These are the kinds of anomalies in the legislation that, as I say, after we debated them, the committee decided that those concerns were not sufficiently grave to accept them as amendments. I am of a different view, but the legislation in its total deserves support. Again, some of these issues will be raised by some of my colleagues and I welcome their observations.

•(1630)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question really was for the parliamentary secretary to the minister, but the member for Eglinton—Lawrence is extremely well informed on any topic he speaks to, so he could probably answer my question.

The member probably knows that insurance markets are international and they are also very cyclical. There are times, say over a three to five year cycle, when insurance companies cut premiums in half and expand coverage, and then just as abruptly they turn around and ratchet premiums up four, five or ten times the price and cut back the coverage.

We are taking a real risk when we pass legislation mandating something, expecting that somehow the insurance, while it might be available today, will be available two or three years down the road. What happens if the insurance markets dry up? In other areas, an extra option is given that if an insurance policy cannot be provided to the regulator, a monetary guarantee or some other alternative has to be put up if the insurance is not available.

Would the member like to comment on that? I have a follow-up question for him after that as well.

•(1635)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has suggested, his question would be best directed to the government that proposed this legislation.

As a member on the committee, I dealt with some of this. I think a member from his own caucus was present when some of these issues were discussed.

I cannot speak to the practices of insurance companies in part because I share his views about their practices and how they set their rates and deal with their own customer base. They really do hold many of their clients in a disadvantaged position. That was raised.

I referred to the adventure tourism business as an example. Those are small and medium size businesses and essentially family operated environments. They have a difficult time getting insurance coverage anyway. This legislation, in my interpretation and I think in the interpretation of others, makes it unnecessary.

When people such as the hon. member suggest that might not be an advantage for the client, he is right. I took pains to give the example in my presentation that was provided to the committee of a

business that operated for 20 years, paid in excess of \$1 million in premiums, but the customers only accessed \$70,000 in payment for liabilities.

On the commercial side, presenters before committee, lawyers and I think insurance people as well, said all of these concerns are addressed by other laws, laws of the sea, liability, maritime, both national and international. It is all a part of doing business and it is all factored in when the shipper or the ship owner puts the vessel in the water or puts products into the vessel. That has already been considered.

This legislation would augment the amount of liability required for those having goods that may, if there is an accident, damage our coastal environment.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, my follow-up question concerning Bill C-7 deals with the whole adventure tourism industry question.

I did sit in for a while at committee when the bill was being considered. It does not seem to me to be overly prudent to exclude the adventure tourism industry on a blanket basis and allow waivers to take the place of financial responsibility. I am really concerned that the public is not going to be protected with this measure.

I recognize that a lot of presentations were made at committee and that people have considered this whole option, but in spite of amendments being suggested that the member would support that would have helped this matter out, the committee decided to proceed with the exemption for the adventure tourism industry.

Is there some way other than making the industry take out insurance policies that the public could be protected? Could there be some sort of guarantee or a fund which the adventure tourism industry association could build up over a few years to pay for liability claims that result from certain accidents in this type of business?

**Hon. Joseph Volpe:** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that Adventure Tourism is captured by the current legislation and that this legislation essentially took it out of what is called part 4. Therefore, it does not make it necessary for it to have to be captured by legislation in order to be held liable under other parts of the legislation.

I gather, because I cannot speak for them, that other members on the government side and other opposition members were convinced by that particular argument. I shared the member's views and presented amendments that were defeated by the government and the other two opposition parties, including his own. We presented what we needed to do in order to address those concerns without expressing any malice. The other two opposition parties and the government side were more convinced by the argument that said that just because we were taking it out of part 4 did not mean that we could not hold other people liable. I cannot say more than that. They were convinced by that argument and we on the Liberal side were not.

However, the legislation passed through committee because that is the way things happen. We need to vote on some amendments.

*Government Orders*

I am glad the hon. member still shares the concerns that I expressed in committee and that I put forward in writing through amendments. However, the Adventure Tourism business operators and tourism associations in general, I guess, made a compelling enough argument for the committee to accept the view that it is okay to take Adventure Tourism out of part 4.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Correctional Service Canada; the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East, Oil and Gas Industry; the hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's, Revenue Canada.

**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-7, An Act to amend the Marine Liability Act and the Federal Courts Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

During the few minutes I have to speak, I would like to take the time to go over the entire bill in order to ensure that our viewers have a clear understanding of this bill.

First of all, our party will be supporting this bill.

I would like to read part of the summary, which can be found on the first page of the bill, after the title:

This enactment amends Parts 3 and 4 of the Marine Liability Act to clarify certain rules of the limitation of liability of owners of ships for maritime claims and liability for the carriage of passengers, in particular the treatment of participants in adventure tourism activities.

The articles affected by this bill relate directly to liability and insurance. The bill limits the liability of shipowners in cases of maritime claims. This is a rather complicated text for shipowners. Among other things, it limits them to 2,000 units of account, because before the change, certain excesses in applying the act forced the industry to appeal to the government, asking that the legislation conform to international standards. That is the purpose of this bill.

The same applies to “liability for the carriage of passengers, in particular the treatment of participants in adventure tourism activities”. The act was amended in 2001, and all passenger carriers were required to have insurance. The Marine Liability Act makes shipowners liable and requires them to have insurance.

Shipowners wanted their claims limit to be the same as the international standard, so one sector in particular, the adventure tourism sector, approached the government. The sector has been having major difficulties since the amendments to the Marine Liability Act, which I mentioned earlier, came into force in 2001. Given the requirements for insurance and coverage, the premiums got so high that businesses had to close their doors or operate without insurance, becoming outlaws.

That is pretty hard to understand, unless we realize that adventure tourism operators are often small and medium-sized businesses. I will try to explain because I am not sure that all of the committee members have understood.

In his speech, the minister said that discussion of these amendments began in 2003. A committee considered the matter in 2005. The reason things are not any further ahead in 2009 is that we have had minority governments. It started back in the days of the Liberals, and the government has not had a chance to amend the bill.

The industry was under pressure from insurance companies, and their sky-high insurance rates were adjusted. Earlier, one of our NDP colleagues said that prices fluctuated in the insurance industry. Oddly enough, premiums have gone down this year because this bill is before the House. That is a fact. Faced with the fact that this bill will not apply to adventure tourism, insurance companies have finally talked to each other and decided to stop that kind of exploitation, which is exactly what it was. In terms of accidents, it has been shown that there are far fewer accidents related to adventure tourism than to waterskiing and downhill skiing, for example.

Adventure tourism covers river rafting operations, but some Niagara-based businesses take their clients right up to the falls.

● (1645)

We now have adventure tourism. I am smiling because I am a notary and sometimes we joke with our lawyer colleagues. One of the lawyers was saying that when he goes on an adventure tour, he wants to be safe. He wants to be on a boat that he knows is insured. He said he had gone on a whale-watching expedition. There are some on the St. Lawrence. Adventure tours now use small vessels for whale-watching, the same kind of boat used for river rafting. They can get closer to the whales but the risk is greater. There is a market for such expeditions. Some people like to take greater risks. If the lawyers do not wish to take risks, they can go on the big cruise ships, which carry insurance. Those who want a bit more excitement and adventure will take the smaller boats and try to get closer to the whales. That is the reality.

I was not referring to my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin because taking risks does not bother him. I have seen his photographs and he is not afraid to get close to the animals. He went on a photo safari and you have to be careful when you get close to the animals.

Adventure tourism is a growing market. We know that Quebec is lucky to have hundreds of thousands of bodies of water, lakes and beautiful rivers. There are many small and medium-sized companies in this sector and the lawyers mentioned that in Quebec many companies do not have insurance. They do not have the money to pay for the insurance. However, there is a market for this type of tourism and this bill addresses the situation. It excludes adventure tourism from this requirement, but not just haphazardly.

We must take the time to read section 37.1 of the act, on page 5 of the bill, which states:

This Part does not apply to an adventure tourism activity that meets the following conditions:

(a) it exposes participants to an aquatic environment;

(b) it normally requires safety equipment and procedures beyond those normally used in the carriage of passengers;

Of course, if the rafts go close to the whales or people go downriver in speed boats, passengers wear rescue belts and get some training before beginning the activity so that they are aware of the danger. People can always decide not to go if they do not want to. The operators have measures in place. The same clause also says that:

(c) participants are exposed to greater risks than passengers are normally exposed to in the carriage of passengers;

Yes, there are whale-watching excursions on bigger vessels on the St. Lawrence. People who do not want to take any risks go on those boats. Those boats have insurance. There is no problem. However, people who do want to take more risks are aware that they have to take more safety precautions. They have to wear their life jackets, which is not the case with cruise ships or day boats. I will read the next part of the clause:

(d) its risks have been presented to the participants and they have accepted in writing to be exposed to them;

All participants have to sign a document saying that they understand the risks and will not hold the operator responsible in case of an accident. The bill continues:

(e) any condition prescribed under paragraph 39(c).

This is about mandatory training, a short preparation course. That is how it works. It is not true that some people will not be covered. There are requirements. I think that people who have signed the document are aware that the activity requires more safety precautions because they are required to wear life jackets at all times. Sometimes things are done differently than on cruise ships or day boats. These people know that they are participating in adventure tourism and that if a serious accident happens, which nobody wants, after they have signed the waiver, they cannot sue the operator.

● (1650)

Of course, I can understand that people who do not take part in such activities will be thinking that they will end up not being covered by insurance if they are on a cruise ship. That is not what it is all about. We are talking about activity that is far closer to the aquatic environment. That is the reality. Think of white water rafting, but also of boats that go close to falls, like the ones at Niagara Falls. People want to see them up close, as close as possible, and things can go wrong.

It is the same thing when a person goes out whale-watching in an inflatable, in order to be able to get as close as possible. There have been reports on this. We have to respect aquatic life, but this is far closer than a person can get with a cruise ship or a day boat in order to observe marine life. We could name other similar activities. Those watching can surely think of a lot of other activities that take place on water.

When we are engaged in this type of activity, adventure tourism, and we have to sign a waiver in case of accident, i.e. something indicating that the operator will not be held responsible, we always have the choice of just not going. We have a choice not to take part in this activity, to say that we are not prepared to take responsibility on ourselves for what might happen. That does not mean we are

### *Government Orders*

unfriendly, and the operator will understand that. It is a reality, but we cannot prevent an industry from developing, especially in Quebec with all its waterways. There is such potential, and operators have succeeded in developing a clientele.

I might add that the young generation—which I hope I can still count myself as part of—wants a little more excitement in their lives and their activities. There is a whole generation of skateboarders and wakeboarders, and I know my colleagues have said how dangerous this is. People get hurt all the time doing water skiing and wakeboarding. I have a lakeside property and I know that. These, of course, are private properties and people who engage in these sports are responsible for their activities.

At present, there is real potential for activities that are much more participatory than passive, in other words, involving sitting and watching. Some people prefer to get more involved. We must recognize that. When legislation forces businesses to insure themselves, it is like winning the lottery. Insurance companies tell themselves that the legislation will force people to pay, either to their company or to another. They are charged so much that they cannot even operate, grow or even make a profit.

Of course, this bill addresses more than just that. I will continue reading from the summary, which can be found before the first page, and I quote:

It also amends Part 6 of that Act to implement the Protocol of 2003 to the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1992 as well as the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage, 2001. The enactment continues, in Part 7, the Ship-source Oil Pollution Fund and modernizes its governance.

I am sure we all remember the *Exxon Valdez* disaster off the coast of Alaska, which of course had certain repercussions for Canada. In order to avoid another situation like that, it is important that the oil pollution fund, created in Canada, is well funded, that enough money is collected, that the fund is properly governed and of course, that it is modernized to conform to international standards under the 2003 international protocol. This will allow us to renew it.

As I said, studies were conducted in 2005 and the industry had no criticisms in this file. Both the legal community and the industry agree. This file suffered too many delays to be passed quickly. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives have been dragging their feet on this. They could have passed it quickly, but no, they delayed until 2009.

● (1655)

We have to modernize this fund, because we never know what sort of accident could happen. No one wants oil pollution. The Conservative government is looking at developing the Arctic. There is ice and there is the Northwest Passage. A lot is happening in this regard. But there could also be oil and fuel spills and shipwrecks.

*Government Orders*

We are taking more and more risks, and that always surprises me. There should be ice in the Northwest Passage. If people were really thinking about their children and grandchildren, the rest of Canada would have done as Quebec has done for a long time: it would have tried to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and complied with the Kyoto protocol. Then we might not be talking today about developing the passage through the Arctic for marine traffic. We would be talking about a good sheet of ice, a good ice floe. That would be good for us, for our children, for our grandchildren and for future generations. That is not what the Liberals started. They started making the ice melt in the north. The Conservatives have picked up where the Liberals left off, and they think that everything is great. That is a fact.

This is what happens when we do not take action to reduce greenhouse gases and we always say that it is not our fault and that things are worse elsewhere. We blithely talk about running ships through ice floes. And we create funds because there could be oil spills. The government is not developing the north and the Arctic for the sake of the people there, despite what it would have us believe. In fact, it is because of the undersea oil there. That is the real reason. There is a reason why the Russians are trying to take some of our land. While this is going on, we have to stand up.

As I said, if Canada had fought to reduce greenhouse gases, there would be nothing but ice in the Arctic and we would not be discussing this today. One day, people who are fed up will pass judgment on the Conservatives and the Liberals. Their children and grandchildren will tell them that when they were in the House of Commons, they did everything they could to despoil the planet.

Fortunately, the Bloc Québécois is Quebec's conscience in this House. At least, the written record will prove that we warned them. That, too, is a fact.

And now for the last part of the bill. Part 8 includes:

—general provisions relating to the administration and enforcement of offences under that Act and creates a maritime lien for Canadian ship suppliers against foreign vessels and establishes a general limitation period for proceedings not covered by other limitation periods.

This has given rise, once again, to debate between the legal community and the industry on the maritime lien, although not necessarily on the need for one, but on its implementation and the text that was tabled. The request was made by our Quebec and Canadian suppliers.

The United States has a lien. Some Canadian vessels must be repaired or may wish to obtain or purchase services or goods from American suppliers. If they do not pay, a lien is created and the ship can be seized. That is not the case in Canada. It does not apply to American vessels that arrive here. If our suppliers were not paid, there would be no way of asserting our rights or creating a lien on the ship. Canadian shipowners told us that we needed this legislation to be fair but that our Canadian vessels should not be covered by this legislation. We are asking for reciprocity with the United States. Having said that, we did not reach an agreement.

I will read the applicable clause of the bill because it is not that long. This is what clause 139 says about a maritime lien:

139. (1) In this section, “foreign vessel” has the same meaning as in section 2 of the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

(2) A person, carrying on business in Canada, has a maritime lien against a foreign vessel for claims that arise

(a) in respect of goods, materials or services wherever supplied to the foreign vessel for its operation or maintenance, including, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, stevedoring and lighterage; or

(b) out of a contract relating to the repair or equipping of the foreign vessel.

My colleague for Manicouagan is quite aware of this because he spends his time in such ports as the ones in Sept-Îles or Baie-Comeau. Thus—

• (1700)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Moving on to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech on this bill. He never ceases to amaze me with his eloquence and his ability to see something pleasant in serious topics. I really like to work with him in committee.

Today he has baptized the Bloc Québécois, if I may use a religious term in a secular context, as the “conscience”, not only of Quebec, but of Canadian law. Does he feel that the activity of his party with respect to this law presented to us by the present government is sufficient, given the current challenges and conditions, not the climatic conditions but the legal ones, that is the penalties and accountability for international businesses in Canadian waters and in the Canadian waters of the largest province, Quebec? Does he feel that this role of conscience he attributes to his party is sufficient to balance out the inactivity, or unproductive activity, of the present government?

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for Eglinton—Lawrence for his kind words about me. If he lived in my riding, perhaps he would vote for me. That would be interesting.

The bill as introduced is an adjustment to international laws. I could, of course, disagree with the fact that we are discussing this entire matter of a fund in the event of oil spills. I gave the Arctic as an example because it is distressing to think of there being no more ice and ships being able to travel wherever they wish. Nevertheless, as a country we will have to adjust. Taking Quebec as an example, if we were a country, we would have to adapt such a law to international laws.

Where I disagree with my colleague's opinion is in discussing adventure tourism, as he knows. I say we are the conscience of Quebec in this House because adventure tourism is very much a reality in Quebec. There is some in other provinces, but because of the St. Lawrence River and our hundreds of thousands of lakes and waterways, Quebec has a great many small and medium businesses involved in adventure tourism. For us it is important to see that industry covered by this bill and everything placed in its proper perspective.

The way that adventure tourism has been excluded, by the obligation to sign a waiver if one wants to participate in it, is a good way of maintaining that industry and not killing it off with unaffordably high insurance premiums.

*Government Orders*

• (1705)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, once again, my comment is for my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. He asked whether I would vote for him if I lived in his riding. I hope that he would vote for me in Eglinton—Lawrence. Today, however, we are talking about conscience. We have here in the House our colleague from Don Valley West, who is an expert on issues related to conscience. He is a clergyman.

I would like to know if my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel talked to the member for Don Valley West before standing up to say that his party serves as the House's conscience?

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I do not know which religion my Liberal colleague subscribes to. However, I can comment on the Liberal Party's demands and the amendments it proposed, particularly with respect to maritime liens.

I know that his colleagues worked hard to present amendments that are in line with the Canadian Bar Association's position. However, the Bar and his colleague are trying to tell us that the shipowner should be prudent. There should be a contract with the owner when the service is provided or when a subcontractor works on a boat so that the lien can come into effect.

I have a very hard time accepting that, because owners can be in any country around the world. When we asked departmental officials about this, they said that they were aware of the Canadian Bar Association's position and that of other lawyers who specialize in maritime law. They said that this was the best solution because it was easier for suppliers. The purpose of the legislation is not to protect shipowners, but to protect suppliers who end up not getting paid by owners.

I know that they worked hard. I know that this is a legal issue, but the departmental officials who analyzed the legal situation had a very strong position, and I would say that they did a better job of convincing me than my Liberal colleague did. Who knows—maybe that will change down the road.

• (1710)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank all those who applauded me from across the House. That is very nice. It really speaks to the goodwill that came out of the transport committee in bringing forward the third reading of this bill to amend the Marine Liability Act.

I may not have served as much time as many of my august compatriots on the transport committee but in the time I have been here I did feel that this bill was a good example of parliamentarians working carefully on a bill that had very little partisan aspects to it and very little ideology. It is a pretty straightforward bill that would put into place certain international conventions and then ratify them. These conventions have been around for a very long time in which Canadian law has picked up, in one way or the other, over that time and there are provisions within those conventions.

The bulk of the bill's importance was within the conventions but that did not necessarily translate into the time the committee spent on

those particular aspects of it. More of the committee's time was spent on the Adventure Tourism aspect of it and the opportunities for establishing liens against foreign vessels in Canadian waters.

The committee's work should be applauded by all members of the House because it does represent good work together. However, it is not like this committee does this all the time. We have differences. Quite clearly, the debate that took place over Bill C-9, the amendments to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, showed that when the issues are controversial and they speak to differences in ideological direction on the committee there will be a healthy debate and a strong presence by all parties.

The functioning of the committee is good but this is a committee that is also in charge of infrastructure. What I have seen here on the committee is a failure to deal with infrastructure issues. We saw that quite clearly with a vote at the last committee meeting on a motion brought forward by a Liberal member to examine right away the aspects of the infrastructure stimulus moneys that had been put forward in the budget. The motion was defeated because there was a reluctance on the part of two of the parties to deal with a very important part of parliamentary business, for which this committee is responsible. The committee has a responsibility to Canadians to ensure that the work that is going on under the infrastructure stimulus program is well understood and well expressed in the committee.

I find that these types of issues sometime need to come back to Parliament as well. We need to have exposure of what we are doing on the committee in order for the committee to work properly and for individual members on the committee representing their parties to understand that there are reactions to the positions they take.

I was quite willing to accept that with Bill C-9. I had to come and stand up again in Parliament to debate amendments to try to bring sense to the bill as I saw it. I exposed the workings of the bill because I considered it inappropriate but I suffered the consequences in the vote and did not get what I wanted. Nonetheless, the House understood what was going on in the committee and it understood what was happening with the bill, which is a better situation for everyone. Infrastructure is important and I hope the committee will come around, as it has come around with Bill C-7, to work on the issues that are important and in front of the committee.

• (1715)

I mentioned earlier that two aspects of the bill were under some degree of scrutiny and that they were clearly understood by the committee as to their impact on citizens in Canada. The impact of ratifying conventions when enormous sums of money may or may not be utilized for the purposes of cleaning up oil spills or other types of pollution that occur in waterways was probably not that well understood by the committee and we simply accepted the good advice that came from a variety of witnesses and experts in international law who gave us the assurance that these larger issues matched up to what was good for Canada.

There is background to this. In May 2005, Transport Canada put forward a marine law reform discussion paper in which many of the points in the bill were brought out so that the legal communities had many years to take a look at it and understand what was happening with the larger conventions.

*Government Orders*

When it comes to the smaller issues, such as Adventure Tourism, there were many more grounds for improvement in the bill and the government, in bringing forward a number of amendments, admitted that, which was a good step forward. We have come to a better understanding of how Adventure Tourism waivers will work in the system and how this bill would enhance the ability of the industry, which is not a huge industry and a very seasonal industry.

I understand the Adventure Tourism industry because in my hometown of Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, we have probably one of the largest whitewater rivers in Canada with class six rapids. For many years we had Adventure Tourism with rubber rafts on that river but the nature of the risk involved with these rubber rafts, bringing people in and putting them on the river, made the business of Adventure Tourism very difficult and expensive to operate.

Adventure Tourism is not a gold mine of opportunity and the cost of insurance is a drag on the system. The opportunity to use waivers to allow people to engage in Adventure Tourism is with the understanding that they take on the risk themselves for the activity that they are involved in as long as the operator provides a certain measure of safe conditions, equipment, professional conduct and trained guides. When those are in place, the waivers are acceptable and there is a prior understanding by the people involved in the Adventure Tourism that the waivers are something they can either accept or not participate in the activity. They have that knowledge prior to showing up at the river's edge with their families for the Adventure Tourism opportunity.

All of those things were discussed. We went through them in detail in committee and heard from many witnesses and I think we came to a satisfactory solution on Adventure Tourism. However, this would be the third attempt by Parliament to come to grips with it. There was a law in place prior to 2000, then another law was put in place in 2000 and now we have another law in 2009. This subject is not perfect and will not likely to be perfect but it is the third iteration of the understanding of the nature of the liability that Adventure Tourism operators take on.

● (1720)

This subject is not perfect, and not likely to be perfect, but this is the third iteration of the understanding of the nature of the liability that adventure tourism operators take on. We worked on it and I think in all conscience all parties tried to come to a good understanding on this issue.

Then we took on another issue that was controversial, and a number lawyers were present to debate this with us. This issue was the nature of maritime liens and whether maritime liens, as outlined in the bill, would be effective to ensure Canadian suppliers would get their money out of foreign boats before they escaped to the high seas.

There was considerable debate on this. There was a sense that if we gave it to the lawyers, it might not be good enough because lawyers might not be available, their fees might be too high, the timing might not work right and the foreign vessel would escape Canadian waters and the Canadian supplier would be out the dollars for whatever type of provision had been given to the boat. There were differences of opinion on it, but they were differences of opinion that were primarily technical. They were not going to stop a

ship supplier from putting a lien against a boat. They might make it a little more difficult, they might make it expensive, but it was there for the ship supplier to do it.

This was the compromise we finally achieved in putting the bill forward to Parliament. My Liberal colleagues made valiant presentations about the nature of the lien and the nature of work of lawyers, and I thank them for that. The Liberal Party is well supported by lawyers. They like those intricate details of how these things work. I appreciate the work they did. I think we have come to a solution on that one.

The bill is now before us. The good work of the transport committee in agreeing to put the bill forward, with the unanimous support for it at the end, suggests it should pass through Parliament just like a foreign vessel slipping out of Canadian waters without paying its bill.

We are not at the end of debate at the transport committee. We saw this in the previous Parliament when the safety management system in the bill to amend the Aeronautics Act was fought tooth and nail by my party, and to good success. We kept it from coming back and being foisted upon the Canadian public in a fashion that it could have been without the hard work of the New Democratic Party. We stood day after day and debated the issue to ensure it did not go forward.

That kind of work will continue in the transport committee when the occasion requires it. At this point in time, though, we can be congratulatory and we can be happy about the work we have done. Parliament now has the opportunity to move forward in a consensual fashion with the Marine Liability Act.

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Western Arctic for his fine work on the committee, because we are in a congratulatory frame of mind. He is a valuable member for his party.

I thank him for thinking of the contribution of the Liberal Party members on the committee as being valiant and worthy of the support of those who are toiling hard in that very valuable career of law. I am sure, given his grit and his fight, he would be very happy because he fights tooth and nail to get the support of the manicurists and the dentists.

He talked in terms of whether we had glossed over some of these issues. Could he take a moment to reflect upon the debate that addressed the issues of adventure tourism? In his presentations in the committee he also took a very pro-adventure tourism position, especially as it relates to those he sees in operation in Western Arctic.

I know he did not want to gloss over the dangers associated with some adventure tourism. Could he give us some of those views again? I am not sure they came across very thoroughly in the presentations we have seen in the House today on the third reading on the bill.



*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1725)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his perception about the nature of the debate. The adventure tourism debate is one that is not an easy debate. Coming from an area of the country that has considerable adventure tourism, not simply in my own community but across the north, it was important to understand that there would be a definition around adventure tourism. I was not completely satisfied with the definition, but within the bill the government has the ability to put forward conditions and regulations that can carefully define the industry.

In some of the presentations from the witnesses, they were very concerned, and I think my hon. Bloc colleague talked about this in his speech as well, about the potential for operators of non-adventure tourism to take advantage of the law to reduce their liability insurance by offering waivers.

We were quite clearly looking at defining that for adventure tourism. When people are on a Maid of the Mist tour underneath Niagara Falls, it is not considered adventure tourism. The proposed bill will not allow the operators of vessels like that, and I am sure the operators of the Maid of the Mist are not interested in this, to take advantage of the situation to reduce their cost of their liability insurance.

Those were some of the intricacies of the adventure tourism section within the bill.

Laws are made by man and man is not perfect, or humans to be more specific. The bill is not perfect, but it is the third iteration of this issue in front of Parliament, and it is the best so far.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, my question to the member once again deals with the adventure tour operators. It seems to me that one of the ways groups got around expensive insurance programs in the past was to develop their own self-insurance program. In fact, 100 years ago when Prairie farmers could not get insurance for their farms, they banded together and formed mutual insurance companies, like Wawanesa, Red River and all sorts of other well-known insurance companies, which are around to this day.

Perhaps the adventure tour operators, if they find insurance too expensive, should get together and self-insure and develop a pot of money that they could use to pay claims. Then they could insure—

● (1730)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. I will have to interrupt the hon. member in order to give the hon. member for Western Arctic/Western Arctic an opportunity to respond before the call for the vote.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Madam Speaker, the insurance industry does not have many participants in adventure tourism right now. It is really a limited market. That evidence was presented at committee. The potential for co-operative action on this, with the extremely large liability costs without the waivers, is unlikely.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member will have approximately four minutes for questions and answers when debate resumes.

[English]

**AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS**

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-310, An Act to Provide Certain Rights to Air Passengers, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-310 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

● (1800)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 65)***YEAS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Arthur	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brison
Brunelle	Byrne
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Christopherson	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crête
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dion
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Foote
Fry	Gagnon
Gameau	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Harris (St. John's East)
Holland	Hughes
Hyer	Jennings
Julian	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Leslie	Lévesque
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)

*Private Members' Business*

Mendes  
 Murphy (Charlottetown)  
 Neville  
 Pacetti  
 Paquette  
 Pearson  
 Pomerleau  
 Ratansi  
 Rodriguez  
 Roy  
 Savage  
 Siksay  
 Simms  
 St-Cyr  
 Szabo  
 Thibeault  
 Valeriot  
 Volpe  
 Wilfert  
 Zarac — 139

Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
 Murray  
 Oliphant  
 Paillé  
 Patry  
 Plamondon  
 Rafferty  
 Regan  
 Rota  
 Russell  
 Sgro  
 Silva  
 Simson  
 Stoffer  
 Thi Lac  
 Tonks  
 Vincent  
 Wasylcia-Leis  
 Wrzesniewskyj

Uppal  
 Van Loan  
 Verner  
 Warkentin  
 Sky Country)  
 Weston (Saint John)  
 Woodworth  
 Young — 131

Van Kesteren  
 Vellacott  
 Wallace  
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to

Wong  
 Yelich

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

## COMPETITION ACT

The House resumed from May 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-273, An Act to amend the Competition Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (right to repair), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-273 under private members' business.

● (1810)

[English]

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

(Division No. 66)

## YEAS

## Members

Abbott  
 Aglukkaq  
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
 Anders  
 Ashfield  
 Benoit  
 Blackburn  
 Block  
 Boughen  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Brown (Barrie)  
 Cadman  
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
 Casson  
 Clarke  
 Cummins  
 Day  
 Del Mastro  
 Dreeshen  
 Dykstra  
 Finley  
 Fletcher  
 Gallant  
 Goldring  
 Gourde  
 Guergis  
 Hawn  
 Hill  
 Hoeppner  
 Jean  
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
 Kent  
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
 Lauzon  
 Lemieux  
 Lunn  
 MacKay (Central Nova)  
 Mark  
 McColeman  
 Menzies  
 Miller  
 Moore (Fundy Royal)  
 Norlock  
 O'Neill-Gordon  
 Oda  
 Payne  
 Poilievre  
 Preston  
 Rajotte  
 Reid  
 Richardson  
 Ritz  
 Scheer  
 Shea  
 Shory  
 Stanton  
 Sweet  
 Tilson  
 Trost

## NAYS

## Members

Ablonczy  
 Albrecht  
 Ambrose  
 Anderson  
 Baird  
 Bernier  
 Blaney  
 Boucher  
 Breitzkreuz  
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
 Bruinooge  
 Calandra  
 Carrie  
 Chong  
 Clement  
 Davidson  
 Dechert  
 Devolin  
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
 Fast  
 Flaherty  
 Galipeau  
 Glover  
 Goodyear  
 Grewal  
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
 Hiebert  
 Hoback  
 Holder  
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
 Kerr  
 Lake  
 Lebel  
 Lukiwski  
 Lunney  
 MacKenzie  
 Mayes  
 McLeod  
 Merrifield  
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
 Nicholson  
 O'Connor  
 Obhrai  
 Paradis  
 Petit  
 Prentice  
 Raitt  
 Rathgeber  
 Richards  
 Rickford  
 Saxton  
 Schellenberger  
 Shipley  
 Sorenson  
 Storseth  
 Thompson  
 Toews  
 Tweed

Abbott  
 Aglukkaq  
 Allen (Welland)  
 Ambrose  
 André  
 Angus  
 Ashfield  
 Asselin  
 Bachand  
 Bains  
 Bélanger  
 Benoit  
 Bevington  
 Blackburn  
 Blaney  
 Bonsant  
 Boucher  
 Bourgeois  
 Brison  
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
 Brunelle  
 Calandra  
 Cannis  
 Carrie  
 Casson  
 Chong  
 Clarke  
 Coady  
 Comartin  
 Crête  
 Crowder  
 Cummins  
 Davidson  
 Davies (Vancouver East)

Ablonczy  
 Albrecht  
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
 Anderson  
 Andrews  
 Arthur  
 Ashton  
 Atamanenko  
 Bagnell  
 Baird  
 Bellavance  
 Bernier  
 Bigras  
 Blais  
 Block  
 Bouchard  
 Boughen  
 Breitzkreuz  
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
 Bruinooge  
 Cadman  
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
 Cardin  
 Carrier  
 Charlton  
 Christopherson  
 Clement  
 Coderre  
 Cotler  
 Crombie  
 Cullen  
 Cuzner  
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
 Day

*Private Members' Business*

DeBellefeuille  
Demers  
Desnoyers  
Dewar  
Dion  
Dosanjh  
Dryden  
Dufour  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Easter  
Faille  
Finley  
Fletcher  
Gagnon  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goldring  
Gourde  
Grewal  
Guay  
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)  
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
Holder  
Hughes  
Jennings  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Karygiannis  
Kennedy  
Kent  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Laframboise  
Lalonde  
Lavallée  
Lebel  
Lemay  
Leslie  
Lukiwski  
MacAulay  
MacKenzie  
Malo  
Mark  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
Mathysen  
McColeman  
McLeod  
Ménard (Hochelaga)  
Mendes  
Merrifield  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
Murray  
Norlock  
O'Neill-Gordon  
Oda  
Pacetti  
Paquette  
Patry  
Petit  
Poulièvre  
Prentice  
Rafferty  
Ratansi  
Regan  
Rickford  
Rodriguez  
Roy  
Savage  
Scheer  
Sgro  
Shipley  
Siksay  
Simms  
St-Cyr  
Stoffer  
Szabo  
Thibeault  
Tilson  
Tonks  
Uppal

Dechert  
Deschamps  
Devolin  
Dhaliwal  
Dorion  
Dreeshen  
Duceppe  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Dykstra  
Eyking  
Fast  
Flaherty  
Foote  
Galipeau  
Garneau  
Godin  
Goodyear  
Gravelle  
Guarnieri  
Guergis  
Hawn  
Hill  
Hoepfner  
Holland  
Jean  
Julian  
Kania  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Laforest  
Lake  
Lauzon  
Layton  
Lee  
Lemieux  
Lévesque  
Lunn  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Malhi  
Maloway  
Marston  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Masse  
Mayes  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
McTeague  
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
Menzies  
Miller  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Obhrai  
Oliphant  
Paillé  
Paradis  
Payne  
Plamondon  
Pomerleau  
Preston  
Raitt  
Rathgeber  
Richards  
Ritz  
Rota  
Russell  
Saxton  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Silva  
Simson  
Stanton  
Sweet  
Thi Lac  
Thompson  
Toews  
Trost  
Van Loan

Vellacott  
Vincent  
Wallace  
Wasylycia-Leis  
Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wong  
Wrzesnewskyj  
Young

Verner  
Volpe  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to  
Wilfert  
Woodworth  
Yelich  
Zarac — 248

## NAYS

## Members

Anders  
D'Amours  
Goodale  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Lunney  
Neville  
Rajotte  
Sorenson  
Valeriotte — 17

Byrne  
Fry  
Hall Findlay  
LeBlanc  
McCallum  
Pearson  
Reid  
Storseth

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** 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)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wanted to be recorded as voting in favour of the bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member was registered as voting in favour.

\* \* \*

## CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-201, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act (deletion of deduction from annuity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division of the motion at second reading of Bill C-201 under private members' business.

● (1820)

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

*(Division No. 67)*

## YEAS

## Members

Allen (Welland)  
Andrews  
Ashton  
Atamanenko  
Bagnell  
Bélanger  
Bevington  
Blais  
Bouchard  
Brisson  
Byrne  
Cardin  
Charlton  
Coady  
Comartin

André  
Angus  
Asselin  
Bachand  
Bains  
Bellavance  
Bigras  
Bonsant  
Bourgeois  
Brunelle  
Cannis  
Carrier  
Christopherson  
Coderre  
Cotler

*Private Members' Business*

Crête	Crombie	Goldring	Goodyear
Crowder	Cullen	Gourde	Grewal
Cuzner	D'Amours	Guergis	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)	Hawn	Hiebert
DeBellefeuille	Demers	Hill	Hoback
Deschamps	Desnoyers	Hoepfner	Holder
Dewar	Dhaliwal	Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Dion	Dorion	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Dosanjh	Dryden	Kent	Kerr
Duceppe	Dufour	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter	Lauzon	Lebel
Eyking	Faille	Lemieux	Lukiwski
Footé	Fry	Lunn	Lunney
Gagnon	Gameau	MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Godin	Goodale	Mark	Mayes
Gravelle	Guarnieri	McColeman	McLeod
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Menzies	Merrifield
Basques)		Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)		Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Hall Findlay		Norlock	O'Connor
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland	O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Hughes	Hyer	Oda	Paradis
Jennings	Julian	Payne	Petit
Kania	Karygiannis	Poillievre	Prentice
Kennedy	Laforest	Preston	Raitt
Laframboise	Lalonde	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Lavallée	Layton	Reid	Richards
LeBlanc	Lee	Richardson	Rickford
Lemay	Leslie	Ritz	Saxton
Lévesque	MacAulay	Scheer	Schellenberger
Malhi	Malo	Shea	Shiple
Maloway	Marston	Shory	Sorenson
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Stanton	Storseth
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse	Sweet	Thompson
Mathysen	McCallum	Tilson	Toews
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague	Trost	Tweed
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Uppal	Van Kesteren
Mendes	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Van Loan	Vellacott
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray	Verner	Wallace
Neville	Oliphant	Warkentin	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Pacetti	Paillette	Sky Country)	Wong
Paquette	Patry	Weston (Saint John)	Yelich
Pearson	Plamondon	Woodworth	
Pomerleau	Rafferty	Young — 129	
Ratansi	Regan		
Rodriguez	Rota		
Roy	Russell		
Savage	Sgro		
Siksay	Silva		
Simms	Simson		
St-Cyr	Stoffer		
Szabo	Thi Lac		
Thibeault	Tonks		
Valerioté	Vincent		
Völpe	Wasylcia-Leis		
Wilfert	Wrzesniewskij		
Zarac — 139			

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It being 6:25 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT**

The House resumed from March 10 consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the introduction of Motion No. 300 is ambitious and broad, displaying a deep desire by the author to stand strong for our seniors population. In my opinion, the motivation behind such a motion comes from the complete and utter abandonment of seniors by the government over the past three years.

## NAYS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambrose
Anderson	Arthur
Ashfield	Baird
Benoit	Bernier
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Cadman
Calandra	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Glover

I would be remiss in my duties if I did not mention the income trusts flip-flop by the finance minister, a decision that ripped \$35 billion from Canadian investors when it was announced on October 31, 2006.

To refresh the memory of the members of the House, income trusts, the income of which millions of Canadians relied on for financial support, were targeted because of the phantom tax leak. Never mind that the Bank of Montreal and the Royal Bank of Canada backed up a major independent study that found there was no income trust tax leakage, the finance minister obviously knew better.

At the end of the day, insurance and corporate lobbyists proved to be more important to the government than our seniors population. This was just the beginning of a long line of slaps in the face by the government.

People do not have to take my word for it, let me reference the study that was just released by the Senate's committee on aging, entitled "Canada's Aging Population: Seizing the Opportunity". The findings are damning. Seniors face serious gaps in health care, housing, transportation and support systems.

One of the things the committee said it learned is, "Current income security measures for our poorest seniors are not meeting their basic needs". Even more disgraceful is the statement in the final report that states, "The basic income levels provided by the old age security and the guaranteed income supplement do not even meet the poverty line". Let me repeat that; they do not even meet the poverty line. Yet the government sits there, day after day, and promotes the minor concessions that it claims are supporting seniors.

Among the many recommendations made by the committee to the government is to ensure the financial security of Canadians by addressing the needs of older workers through pension and income security reforms. More specifically, the report recommends that the government increases the Canada pension plan benefits and bolsters the guaranteed income supplement. It also recommends that the government looks more closely at the idea of providing a guaranteed annual income for all Canadians.

As usual, this motion demonstrates that it is the Liberal Party that is taking up the cause against a sea of inaction by the current regime.

Just yesterday, there was an article in the *Guelph Mercury* paper that called our finance minister the Alfred E. Newman of Canadian politics because of his "what me worry" type of attitude. This is because of actions like travelling to Europe and telling the Canada-U.K. Chamber of Commerce in London, with a straight face, that relatively speaking this is a mild economic recession.

It is very easy to contrast this kind of record with that of the previous Liberal government.

•(1825)

In the last Liberal budget, in the year 2005, significant investments were made to seniors' programs, from health care to income security to beefing up seniors' savings capabilities. In 2004, the Liberal government pledged to increase the guaranteed income supplement by \$1.5 billion, and in the 2005 budget, the figure was up to \$2.7 billion.

### *Private Members' Business*

There are plenty of great ideas and policy suggestions that could help guide the government towards supporting our seniors, for example, the recent suggestion by the C.D. Howe Institute to create a new savings vehicle called the Canada supplementary pension plan, or CSPP. It would be designed to respond to the estimated 3.5 million workers, 25% of the working public, who are on an inadequate retirement savings track.

The latest numbers of our seniors population, or those who are on the verge of becoming seniors, are staggering. There are 14.5 million Canadians who are 45 years of age or older, representing 42% of the total population. There are 4.6 million Canadians over the age of 65, making up 13.3% of the Canadian population.

The reason this motion tries to cram so many issues together is that seniors have been left without any sense of security, particularly in these troubling economic times. The motion has been written to inspire a government that is unable to recognize the realities of what seniors are facing. It has been written with the hope that it will galvanize action towards a population that will dominate the Canadian landscape in the decades to come. Mostly, though, it has been written because there is currently no leadership on this issue.

However unrealistic my colleague from the Bloc may be in packaging these issues into one, I can sympathize with her. I, too, encounter seniors every day in my riding of Newton—North Delta who are desperate for their issues and concerns to be taken seriously.

Let me conclude by putting a few open-ended questions to this Prime Minister.

If the Prime Minister cannot or is unwilling to take a genuine interest in the fate of seniors, then who else is at risk of falling through the huge cracks in the Conservative government?

More importantly, if betraying seniors is something your government considers as standard practice, then how can Canadians trust the government to offer an adequate response to their issues?

These are questions that everyone, particularly seniors, should carefully think about the next time they step behind the curtain to cast their ballot.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my views with the House.

•(1830)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am delighted to participate this evening in the debate on Motion No. 300, which calls on the government to enhance access to, and the level of, GIS benefits for Canada's poorest seniors.

Let me say at the outset that I fully support this motion. In many ways it mirrors the provisions of the NDP's seniors charter, which I had the privilege of introducing on behalf of our caucus in the last Parliament. That charter guaranteed the right for seniors to an adequate income so they could live their retirement with the dignity and respect they deserve. That motion passed with the overwhelming support of a majority of members in the House.

*Private Members' Business*

Ironically, the Conservatives supported my motion while the Bloc unanimously voted against it. Yet here we are with the Bloc underlining the importance of my motion by echoing its intent with a motion of its own, while the Conservatives are suddenly opposed. It is enough to make anyone's head spin.

However, the bottom line is that we have spent a lot of time in this chamber talking about the current economic downturn. We have talked a lot about the need to protect and create jobs. We have talked a lot about the need to support communities through infrastructure funding, and we have talked a lot about the need to improve employment insurance. We have not spent nearly enough time talking about the impact this economic crisis is having on seniors, the truly innocent victims of this recession.

Even prior to the market collapse of last October, seniors were increasingly finding it difficult to make ends meet. They have worked hard all their lives; they have played by the rules. But everywhere they turn, and with every bill they open, they are paying more and getting less. Now those financial difficulties are being compounded by the global recession and the government's inaction to protect Canadian seniors from its most devastating impacts.

None of the three pillars of our retirement income support system are strong enough to withstand the impact of the economic storm without government assistance. The first pillar, of course, is workplace pensions. Defined benefit pensions were already faltering in Canada long before the current crisis hit the market. However, they were not faltering because of excessive costs, as most employers would want us to believe, rather they faltered because there was a lack of planning on the part of employers to pay for them. Without a doubt, defined benefit plans cost money.

However, few safeguards were in place to put aside pension investment windfalls in good times. Instead, during times when markets were booming and returns from investments were rolling in, employers opted for contribution holidays instead of saving the windfalls for the inevitable rainy days ahead. Today it is not just raining, the monsoon season has arrived.

As company after company closes its doors or seeks CCAA protection, workers are living in fear that their workplace pensions will not be there for their retirement. That is why I introduced the workers first bill as my very first piece of legislation after being elected. That bill would ensure that workers' wages, benefits and pensions would receive super priority in cases of commercial bankruptcy. If we really want to ensure that workers can retire with dignity and respect, we must ensure that they have an adequate retirement income.

My bill, as well as a federal employer-funded system of pension insurance, is essential to achieving that goal. While the sustainability of workplace pensions is crucial, it is important to note that only about one-half of Canada's seniors population receive some income from workplace pensions, and those incomes account for only about 30% of all retirement income received. Despite the important contribution that workplace pensions have made to the well-being of older Canadians, we must focus as well on the other two pillars of Canada's retirement income system, which are private and public pensions.

Private pensions are individual retirement savings vehicles such as RRSPs. Seniors were devastated when they saw their life savings and dreams disappear in the stock market crash of October. The sustainability of workplace pensions was suddenly thrown into question. For those who had RRSPs, the value of their retirement nest egg plummeted. And for those who were already on RRIFs, they were doubly disadvantaged because the minimum withdrawal requirements meant they would be eating deeply into their capital.

The Prime Minister's response was that Canadians need to hang in there and ride out the storm. But seniors, by definition, do not have a lifetime to wait. They do not have earnings with which to replenish their savings, nor do they have the years required for their investment losses to be made up by market gains. They need the government's help now.

The best place for the government to intervene is in the third pillar of Canada's retirement system, and that is public pensions. Public pensions include the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. The only one of the three that is universal is the OAS.

● (1835)

I have a motion on the order paper that calls on the government to increase the OAS immediately by 15% retroactive to January 1 of this year and to index it thereafter. Moreover, a second motion of mine calls on the government to link both CPP and OAS to standard of living levels to ensure that no senior needs to live in poverty.

The third piece of the puzzle is the motion that is before us today, which deals specifically with improvements to the guaranteed income supplement.

First, it would no longer require seniors to apply for the GIS, which is absolutely essential. By the government's own admission, there are currently 135,000 seniors in Canada who are eligible for but not receiving the GIS. It is incumbent upon us to help seniors access the benefits to which they are legitimately entitled, and it is easily done. The Department of Human Resources and Social Development, which administers the GIS, is allowed to exchange information with the Canada Revenue Agency. The CRA collects the tax returns of seniors and, therefore, the government already has the information it needs to determine whether a senior is eligible for the guaranteed income supplement.

The second issue that Motion No. 300 addresses is the fact that the GIS can only be received retroactively for a period of 11 months. A system designed like that is clearly not designed as a system to lift seniors out of poverty. If seniors owe the government money, the Canada Revenue Agency sure would not limit itself to 11 months of retroactivity. It would hound seniors until it had every last cent owing. So it should be for seniors, and the motion before us today would achieve that laudable goal. It would allow for full retroactivity for unpaid pension amounts.

However, even those seniors who are collecting the GIS still are not receiving an income that is high enough to lift them out of poverty. That is hardly a retirement with dignity and respect, which is why the third component of Motion No. 300 seeks to raise the GIS by \$110 per month.

The Conservatives say that such an increase combined with full retroactivity would simply cost too much. They put the figure in the billions of dollars. Let me get this straight. The government can find \$2 billion to continue subsidizing the big banks and big oil companies but it cannot find the money for the neediest seniors in our country.

This is not about a program costing too much. This is all about a government that cares more about its wealthy friends than it cares about the people who built our country. Conservative MPs should be ashamed of themselves. If they took their heads out of the tar sands long enough to actually notice what is happening in communities right across our country, they would realize that by denying seniors an adequate standard of living, they are also denying them hope.

The National Council of Welfare stated, "Poverty does not just mean a lack of income; it can also be a synonym for social exclusion. When people can't meet basic needs, they also cannot afford simple activities like inviting family or friends to dinner on occasion or buying gifts for a child" or grandchild.

It goes on to say that poverty leads to "isolation and social exclusion" which, in turn, "lead to further problems with poor health, depression and dysfunction. Poverty can quickly rob people of their dignity, confidence and hope".

What message are we sending to seniors when we are refusing to lift them up to the poverty line? This is not good public policy. It is not even good fiscal management. It is simply mean-spirited. The government's objection to the final part of Motion No. 300 makes that abundantly clear. It proposes that a surviving spouse be entitled to receive his or her deceased spouse's pension payment for six months. It hardly seems unreasonable to allow people time to mourn their loved ones.

Yes, many will need to make decisions about whether they can continue to live in their homes and continue to keep up with their bills and giving them a little bit of time to make those decisions after the devastating loss of a spouse is simply the compassionate thing to do. The six month extension of the deceased spouse's GIS simply shows a bit of humanity to seniors.

However, the government is not often accused of being compassionate. Instead of accepting the proposals of Motion No. 300 and taking pride in having done right by seniors, its approach to dealing with the GIS is telling seniors to get a job. The only

### *Private Members' Business*

budgetary reform aimed at seniors was the Conservatives announcement that seniors could now work and earn up to \$3,500 before their GIS would be clawed back. Nothing defines the differences between the Conservatives and the NDP more clearly.

The Conservatives want seniors to retire in the uniform of a Wal-Mart greeter. New Democrats want seniors to retire in dignity and respect.

I cannot wait for the votes to be counted on this motion. For every member of the House the question will become which side are they on.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the motion introduced by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot calling on the government to make changes to the guaranteed income supplement in order to enable our seniors to live in dignity.

In December 2007 I had the honour to introduce a bill that proposed similar changes. I was certain that, out of respect for our seniors, parliamentarians could not possibly be against a bill that would enable our seniors to live better.

The point was made that our seniors deserved our recognition for the efforts and sacrifices they had made to build the society we have today. Yet the Conservatives, who themselves condemned this injustice when they were in opposition, all opposed improving the living conditions of our mothers and fathers.

Since 1993, the Bloc Québécois has been trying to make the government admit that it has shortchanged our seniors. It is pathetic that the Liberals and Conservatives support Bloc Québécois initiatives when they are in opposition, yet when they form the government, they find all sorts of crazy reasons to oppose the same initiatives.

The Bloc Québécois toured Quebec in 2007, in order to have a better grasp of the situation of Quebec seniors: their present standards of living, their everyday needs and fears, both now and for the future. We were able to hold discussions with them on the causes of poverty and the solutions proposed by the various levels of government, as well as to learn what they thought about Quebec society.

The findings of our tour were developed into the recommendations in this motion. Of course, our tour findings were not our only sources; we also consulted with associations, federations and seniors' groups all over Quebec.

The motion by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot wholly reflects the four themes of the bill introduced by the Bloc Québécois in December 2007. These were: automatic registration for the guaranteed income supplement; a \$110 monthly increase in the guaranteed income supplement; full retroactivity of the guaranteed income supplement for those who have been shortchanged; a compassionate extension of six months for guaranteed income supplement recipients whose spouse has died.

*Private Members' Business*

On April 17, it was announced in an email that the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that Canadian seniors enjoy the best possible quality of life.

These fine words appeared over the signatures of the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and the Leader of the Government in the Senate and Minister of State for Seniors.

Does the minister realize that the number one factor contributing to well-being among seniors is financial power? It fosters independence, breaks through isolation and provides greater security. Income is one of the most important determinants of health and is the foundation for access to appropriate housing and transportation in order to maintain independence.

Yet the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and all her colleagues voted against the bill on June 4, 2008. One hundred and fifteen Conservatives rose to say no to our seniors. One hundred and fifteen Conservatives chose to leave our seniors in financial insecurity.

According to the National Council of Welfare, poverty is not just lack of income, it can also be a synonym for social exclusion.

When people cannot meet their basic needs, they cannot afford even simple activities, such as inviting family or friends to dinner. Social isolation is one of the key factors in depression. It leads to ill health and discouragement. Poverty can quickly deprive individuals of their dignity, confidence and hope.

A \$110 increase in the amount of the guaranteed income supplement would only bring recipients up to the low-income level, or what was once called the poverty line.

Full retroactivity for unpaid pension benefits would also prove that this government does not operate on a double standard.

● (1845)

If citizens owe 10 years' worth of income tax, the government can collect that money. The six months of compassionate deferral is to acknowledge the surviving spouse's problems and suffering. It is to acknowledge the sudden change that has just taken place in the daily life of a senior. It is to acknowledge that, although the person now lives alone, the government is committed to him or her, considering its obligations, to ensure the person can maintain a good quality of life, out of compassion.

Automatic registration at age 65 goes without saying. With all its sources of information, the government knows exactly when an individual turns 65. Every individual must register for the Canada Pension Plan six months before they turn 65 in order to receive benefits. Furthermore, through reports filed with Canada Revenue Agency, the government knows the financial situation of every Canadian.

In speeches during the debate on the motion moved by my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Conservative members boasted about the budget and the assistance they are providing to the most vulnerable in our society.

I say bravo to the Conservative government's budget decision to increase the age credit amount and all other tax credits, but does the government know that, in order to benefit from tax credits, one must

pay income tax? Does it truly believe that someone living below the poverty line can really benefit from such credits?

I say bravo to the Conservative government's budget decision to allow income splitting, but that still requires a decent income. Does the government believe that a person who receives only the old age pension and guaranteed income supplement benefits from splitting this small income?

I met with hundreds of seniors in my riding of Alfred-Pellan to discuss the bill I introduced in December 2007 and which was very similar to today's motion M-300. I can say how happy they were to know we were looking after their interests. They are appreciative of the fact that we want to help improve their situation.

They told me that automatic registration for the guaranteed income supplement was necessary because the instructions on the forms are in very fine print and because they do not always understand the questions asked about CPP, QPP and RRIFs. They also told me that it is unfair that, after their file is reviewed, retroactive payments cover up to a maximum of 11 months. They also told me about their poverty and the dependence imposed by the government.

These meetings allowed me to understand that our seniors have but one dream and that is to live in dignity.

I would like to take this opportunity to again congratulate my colleague for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot who is taking over from all the members who worked on this file before her. She is a hard worker who is dedicated to helping our seniors by presenting this motion. I am calling on all members to support the motion. It is our shared responsibility. Every member who is at all in touch with his constituents cannot be indifferent to our seniors' need for dignity.

● (1850)

[English]

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am thankful for being allowed to add my voice to this debate on Motion No. 300. This motion, of course, proposes that the government introduce legislation to amend the Old Age Security Act respecting the guaranteed income supplement.

We all share the aim of doing what we can to help our country's seniors enjoy a better quality of life. Despite some of the protestations we hear from across the way, I believe there is a common underlying element within the House that wants to support seniors. They deserve our utmost respect and gratitude for all their contributions to building, and in many cases, safeguarding our country.

Indeed, Canada already has one of the lowest rates of poverty among seniors in the industrialized world and is recognized as a global leader in that regard. A big part of this success is due to the guaranteed income supplement, which is the focus of our debate today.

As recently as 1980, more than 21% of older Canadians lived below the poverty line. By 2006, that figure was less than 6%. Since then, our government has taken numerous additional measures to further assist low-income seniors.



*Private Members' Business*

I remind the House that, since taking office, our government has increased the guaranteed income supplement by 7% over and above the regular indexing for inflation. As many of our seniors continue to work, we have also increased the GIS earnings exemption from \$500 to \$3,500. That is a whopping 600% increase.

Not only have we increased the guaranteed income supplement benefits and left more money in the pockets of Canadian seniors, we have made it easier for low-income seniors to access these benefits. As a result of our government passing Bill C-36 in the last Parliament, seniors now only have to apply for the GIS once and will continue to receive benefits as long as they are eligible and file income tax returns.

To help seniors who may not be aware that they qualify for the GIS, we also send out applications to low-income seniors who do not currently receive the supplement. This measure taken by our government has put these benefits in the hands of an additional 328,000 low-income seniors.

That is not all. We have created a minister of state for seniors and appointed Senator Marjory LeBreton to fill that position. She is doing excellent work to promote the interests and protect the well-being of older Canadians.

We have also set up the National Seniors Council to advise us on seniors issues of national importance. By tapping into the wisdom and knowledge of our older citizens, we ensure that our policies, programs and services meet the changing needs of Canada's aging population.

It was also our Conservative government that, in budget 2008, announced an investment of \$13 million over three years to increase awareness of elder abuse. As we know, that is a significant problem in our society today. What we have done is provide seniors with assistance in dealing with abuse.

The Minister of State for Seniors recently announced 16 new projects across the country to combat elder abuse, from physical abuse to financial and emotional abuse. These projects are funded under our new horizons for seniors program, another important federally funded initiative.

Since its beginning, the new horizons program has funded over 4,200 projects across Canada, helping seniors to bring their leadership, energy and skills to benefit our communities. Indeed, my own riding of Abbotsford has been and continues to be a beneficiary of this unprecedented funding for new horizons.

Perhaps most notable is the fact that our government has also provided more than \$1 billion, not million, in tax relief to Canadian seniors each year by allowing pension income splitting and increasing the seniors' age and pension income credits.

However, I can assure hon. colleagues in the House that we are not finished yet. As Canada's economic action plan made clear, we are taking additional steps to protect seniors during these challenging economic times. We are adding over \$300 million to the \$1.6 billion in targeted tax relief that our government already provides to seniors for the 2009 tax year.

● (1855)

This includes \$200 million in tax relief by reducing the required minimum withdrawal amount for 2008 from RRIFs. This change recognizes the impact of deteriorating market conditions and that impact on seniors in our country.

As well, we are increasing the seniors' age credit by another \$1,000 per year for 2009 and beyond, further increasing the amount of money that stays in seniors' pockets.

The increase in the age credit builds on our government's previous tax relief for seniors and for pensioners. For example, we doubled the amount of the pension income credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and we had already earlier increased the age credit by \$1,000 in our 2006 budget.

We are getting things done for seniors, and recognizing that many older Canadians want to continue to work and recognizing that Canada needs their experience and their talents, we are also investing an additional \$60 million over three years in a targeted initiative for older workers. We also changed the program criteria so that smaller cities with populations of less than 250,000 can also participate.

Before I conclude, I would like to take a moment to comment on the specific proposals contained in today's motion. It is important to note that GIS benefits can already be paid retroactively for up to one year. This reflects what is being done in many other jurisdictions, and in fact, exceeds jurisdictions such as Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and even Australia and New Zealand.

So we are getting the job done for seniors. We are being fair with how we deal with their financial needs.

It is always interesting to note the duplicity of the Liberals in the House. Members may recall that the previous Liberal government, over 13 long years, opposed the motion before us, as we do today. Yet today they are standing up in the House to support it.

Only three and a half years ago, on November 18, 2005, during debate on a similar bill, the Liberal member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine said:

...I cannot support Bill C-301.

If passed into law, the bill would bog down Canada's retirement income system in reams of red tape. It would create an undue burden on the system, from both a fiscal and technical perspective. And without the checks and balances found in the current application process, it would lead to increased fraud and abuse.

That was back in 2005. Today her colleagues, the Liberal members in the House, are actually getting up and saying that they now support it, because they are no longer in government, so they do not have to be accountable. They do not have to place this motion within the context of an economic action plan.

Here is what the former Liberal parliamentary secretary to the social development minister said, again during debate on Bill C-301:

I completely agree...that this bill, if passed, would unreasonably burden the governmental retirement system administratively, technically and financially. There is nothing dishonest about that...Without the application process and income verification, the system would be open to abuse.

*Private Members' Business*

Again, that is the Liberals speaking three years ago and today saying something quite different. Today the Liberals have flip-flopped. Suddenly something they were never prepared to do before when in government becomes perfectly okay when they are no longer in government. That is duplicity.

In closing, let me make a couple of points. The costs of this motion are incredibly high to the taxpayers of this country. The estimated price tag for this motion is \$6 billion. Yet the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc have pulled this out of thin air and said that they want us to implement it. Who will suffer? It is the hard-working taxpayers and families of this country. These proposals, while perhaps well intentioned, really do not reflect the fiscal and economic reality in Canada today.

Our government has taken and will continue to take significant, meaningful and realistic steps to help low-income seniors and to improve their quality of life. We have made huge gains in assisting our seniors to improve their quality of life, and I encourage members opposite, first, to put aside all their partisanship and their game-playing and to join us in actually doing the work of our government and supporting seniors who need it the most.

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite called for justice, and I am here to talk about justice. Several years ago, an older person came to my office with a retroactivity case. That person owed money to the department responsible for pensions and old age security. The department was asking for three years' worth of payments. The mistake was made because of a coding error in the department.

But they did not ask the individual to reimburse one year's worth of payments; they asked for three. When members opposite talk about justice now, I find their statements abhorrent. They say it would cost \$6 billion, and that that would be too much.

How can they give oil companies \$2 billion worth of tax breaks every year and buy over \$17 billion worth of military equipment over the past six years, yet not help society's poorest, the seniors who built Quebec?

I wish to thank certain Bloc Québécois members who helped me with this motion. I thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, the Bloc Québécois seniors critic, for her support and help with this motion. I would also like to congratulate my colleague from Laval, who seconded my motion, as well as the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan, who was the original instigator of this idea. This is the third time the Bloc Québécois is bringing forward this idea.

When they were in opposition, the Conservatives supported the principle of this motion. The member across the floor spoke at length about the fact that the Liberals had gone back on their word. I would now like to talk about how the Conservatives have gone back on their word, since when they were in opposition, they supported the principle of this motion. We are talking about increasing, by \$110, the monthly income of the most vulnerable people in Quebec and Canada, about continuing the benefits for a period of six months to a surviving spouse, about automatic registration for people over 65 who are entitled to the guaranteed income supplement, and about full

retroactivity for payments. These are concrete measures that would really help our seniors.

The measures proposed by the Conservatives only help people who pay income tax. Furthermore, just because someone eats one meal a day does not mean that individual will not die of hunger because he or she eats every day. We in the Bloc Québécois want to help people to be able to eat three times a day. It is not a matter of simply putting them in survival mode, allowing them to eat just once a day and telling them that that is enough and they will not die.

Moreover, every time there is an election campaign, we hear the Conservatives and the Liberals make election promises to help seniors.

I also want a commitment from the Liberals. Why? Because if we are talking about retroactivity, it is because the Liberals created this situation. Basically, when they were in power, they did not inform seniors that they were entitled to a guaranteed income supplement.

I do not want the Liberals to act like firefighters who light fires now only to put them out after they are already lit. Their current position on the matter is not clear.

I would also like to invite the Leader of the Opposition to send a message to all his party members so that we have unanimous support for this motion that will help seniors throughout Quebec and Canada. We all have seniors in our ridings. Every member in this House is affected by the motion I am tabling today given that all have seniors in their ridings and have at least one person living below the poverty line who needs this measure.

The 35,000 people we are looking for do not all live in my riding. There are some living in every Quebec and Canadian riding and I know there is at least one in each of the 308 ridings represented in Parliament.

I would also like to say to the Conservatives, who speak of recognizing the Quebec nation that, if they recognize the Quebec nation they should also acknowledge the fact that, in 2007, a unanimous motion of the National Assembly of Quebec supported the demands of seniors.

I am not alone in this battle. Seniors' associations support us and are asking the government to help them. The government should not help just poor seniors, it should help the most needy. The purpose of this motion is to help those most in need.

● (1905)

My Bloc Québécois colleagues will not abandon seniors in need.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly, 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.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**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):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, May 27, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, in March I asked a question of the Minister of Public Safety on whether he would agree to implement the recommendations made by Commissioner Sapers in his report on the tragic death of Ashley Smith, who died cold, alone and uncared for in a Kitchener prison. Ashley Smith was a native of Moncton, New Brunswick, in my riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

At the time, the minister thanked the commissioner for his work, but did not give an answer regarding the implementation of the recommendations. We understood. The report had just been released, but that was in March.

I will refresh the parliamentary secretary's memory with respect to the 16 recommendations. I will highlight them and ask why there has not been a formal response.

The first recommendation is that the recommendations emanating from the National Board of Investigation and the independent psychological report produced by Dr. Margo Rivera should be implemented. As well, I have information of which the parliamentary secretary should take note. The grieving mother's representative has asked for a copy of the latest and last psychological report done by Dr. Margo Rivera on the level of treatment received by Ashley Smith before her untimely death and has been refused access to that.

A number of the other recommendations deal with what should be done in our corrections facilities so an event like Ashley Smith's death does not happen again. They include: the Correctional Service should group its women's facilities under a reporting structure independent of the regions; the Correctional Service should issue immediate direction to all staff regarding the legislated requirements to take into consideration the condition of each person under its care; and the Correctional Service should immediately review all cases of long-term segregation where mental issues are a contributing factor.

In my province of New Brunswick, the ombudsman, Bernard Richard, has prepared a report on the Ashley Smith matter. As well, mental health issues are paramount. What is the government doing

about those mental health issues that are so prevalent in the death, in the case, in the life of Ashley Smith?

Second, on March 4, the grieving mother's representative made public a letter to the minister, requesting that the corrections investigator, Mr. Sapers, finish the work that he started and move forward with respect to what happened in Ashley Smith's situation. It is only in determining what happened in Ashley Smith's situation that the corrections system can be bettered with respect to those with mental health issues in the care of our corrections facilities.

When was there a response to the March 4 letter from the grieving mother of Ashley Smith? On May 6. Is that the respect we accord to the grieving mother of a victim who died in such an awful way?

Finally, what happened to access to the video of Ashley Smith's last moments on Earth? The grieving mother's representative has been refused access to it. The Access to Information Act erroneously records information dealing with many levels, one of them being national security.

When will the government show that it cares about what happened to Ashley Smith and do something about all the other Ashley Smiths out there in the system?

• (1910)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question raised in the House on March 4, 2009, by the hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe regarding the recommendations made by the Office of the Correctional Investigator following the tragic death of Ashley Smith.

I would like to highlight that this government has been working with both officials from the Correctional Service of Canada and the Office of the Correctional Investigator to address the areas of concern identified by Mr. Sapers to ensure that his recommendations are appropriately addressed.

As one may recall, in the 2008 federal budget, the Government of Canada announced that the service will receive \$16.6 million annually in permanent funding, commencing in 2009-10, to enhance institutional mental health services, in particular to screen offenders for mental disorders at admission. This will improve the continuum of care provided and the correctional results for federal offenders, including women, with mental disorders.

The Correctional Service of Canada has already taken action to prevent deaths in custody and to address many of the recommendations raised in the correctional investigator's report. Although the service has assessed offenders at intake for some time, in 2008, it implemented an enhanced screening process for mental health problems and suicide risks upon an offender's admission into federal custody. Referrals are then made, where necessary, to mental health professionals to ensure appropriate interventions occur.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The Correctional Service of Canada is developing alternatives to the use of long-term segregation for offenders with mental health issues who are not certifiable under provincial mental health legislation and who do not consent to treatment. This includes a review of the capacity to address the needs of women offenders with mental health and behavioural needs. Short- and long-term strategies have been developed on service, support and accommodation needs for women offenders identified in this group.

The policy related to segregation has been amended to explicitly include a role for the chief of health care and psychology. The Correctional Service of Canada approved the implementation of a one-year pilot project, a mobile interdisciplinary treatment assessment and consultation team, to support women's institutions in the management of women offenders with substantive mental health and behavioural difficulties. This team is mandated to provide advice and expertise to operational sites and regions on the integrated management of high-risk, high-needs women.

Health care staff will ensure that health information is shared with the case management team when it is relevant to correctional decision-making, particularly in cases related to institutional placements, transfers, administrative segregation and disciplinary measures. This service revised its grievance policy in 2008 to ensure that complaints and grievances submitted by segregated offenders are identified daily, monitored regularly, classified properly and provided with the priority they merit. All high-priority grievances for segregated inmates will be forwarded to the warden without delay.

The service invited provincial and territorial coroners and chief medical examiners to a meeting in March 2009 to discuss how to better address the issue of deaths in custody and to review its plans for action for moving forward. The Correctional Service of Canada is also taking significant steps to increase its services and support for high-needs women offenders. As part of training efforts to better deal with high-needs women offenders, it has developed mental health training for front-line staff and managers who work in women's institutions.

Previously, in 2004, the Correctional Service of Canada developed a mental health strategy in Canada's prisons to improve its capacity to deliver mental health care to offenders in institutions.

• (1915)

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Madam Speaker, there was no answer to the question of why it took two months to respond the grieving mother's representative. There was no answer to the question about what happened to access to the video of the last moments of a grieving mother's daughter's life. Access to a video of Ashley Smith's last moments were denied to the grieving mother, and access to a comprehensive report by Dr. Margo Rivera with respect to the psychological treatment given to Ashley Smith was denied.

There is a saying that if one does not know what one has done wrong, one cannot correct things. Mr. Sapers went far. He has more work to do. Why will the government not let Mr. Sapers continue and finish his work? Why will it not regard the grieving mother's wishes with more respect?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie:** Madam Speaker, ensuring appropriate access to professional mental health services is a priority for both the Government of Canada and the Correctional Service of Canada. The

Government of Canada has taken action on this issue, and the service is fully committed to implementing appropriate and effective measures to help prevent deaths in custody.

To this end, the service has implemented a number of measures in response to the recommendations set forth by the correctional investigator. It is working to address the many issues and challenges that women offenders face and has taken steps to increase its services and support to high-needs women offenders. The Correctional Service is committed to improving upon existing practices and procedures as they relate to mental health services that contribute to the improvement and maintenance of offenders' mental health and adjustment to incarceration and assist them in becoming a law-abiding citizens.

As I previously mentioned, an action plan has been developed to respond to Mr. Sapers' recommendation following his investigation into the incident. The Correctional Service has already implemented and is in the process of implementing a number of measures in this regard.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, about a month and a half ago I raised concerns that I and members of my caucus had with respect to the new merger between Petro-Canada and Suncor. While we have accepted and heralded the impact this will have certainly in terms of crude development, known as the upstream, our concerns have been confined to the effect this will have on the downstream.

To understand this industry, we have to understand a little bit about retailing, a little bit about refining, and of course the concerns in Canada about potential shortages, particularly as it relates to diesel in the Prairies and gasoline in places like Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I do not think it is lost on you or others that should the merger take place, and this has been recognized indeed by the chairman of Suncor, that in fact in many communities across Canada, and I will not list them all, there will be a fewer number of players in that the threshold of 35% which constitutes a dominance will certainly take hold. In fact, if the new entity of Suncor Petro-Can Pioneer UPI is indeed given an opportunity, communities like Ajax, Pickering, Barrie, Belleville, Bolton, Brampton, Brockville, Burlington, Cambridge, Chatham, Toronto, Cobourg, Etobicoke, Fort Erie, Georgetown, and so on, will be affected. We have to be concerned. There needs to be an understanding about the market.

Sunoco in the past has been a fairly strong user of refined product and giving this to independents. It has an upgrader on the diesel side in Fort McMurray, Alberta. As well, Petro-Canada has its own refinery which produces diesel in Edmonton.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

If the two entities come together and decide for efficiency reasons, as is often the case in a merged entity, to shut one or the other facility down, it means an acute situation for critical supply of diesel in that part of the country will be further affected. That cannot be good certainly in terms of access to product, but most important, for the wholesale market for diesel in western Canada.

We, as Liberals, are very concerned about the prospect that we have seen in periods of shortage where there have been disruptions by other means in the United States and elsewhere. We also know that diesel in Alberta for instance follows the crude price. Particularly because it is seasonal, as less rigs are opened up or worked on during the winter months, it means that diesel prices go up.

On the gasoline side, we know that in my province of Ontario there is an absolute shortage of gasoline. The effect of not ensuring there is a proper divestiture order by the Competition Bureau to ensure there is adequate supply and that the divestiture order is rendered to new refinery entities to continue maintaining the network that is there will only have the unintended consequences of making a bad situation a lot worse.

To that end, I call upon the Government of Canada to work very closely and to understand the facts of this industry to ensure that there is no rubber stamp to something that I think will not only substantially lessen competition, but also will bring harm to the competitive process, not to mention at a time that we are seeing rising fuel prices at this time of the year without any due regard to supply and demand. This shortage that we are experiencing in some parts of the country at various intermittent times must not be aggravated or enhanced by a decision to simply give a quick regard to this particular merger.

I say this in the context as well that the light has been shone on this issue by members of this party in terms of ensuring that Canadians have adequate supply. The extent to which this merger proceeds without proper, vigorous oversight without recognizing the markets will only make the situation a lot worse for all of us as Canadians.

● (1920)

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I note that was more of a statement than a question, but it relates to a question that was asked earlier in regard to this merger.

I am told that the Competition Bureau is currently taking the steps necessary to review this proposed merger in a timely fashion in order to determine whether it would likely result in a substantial lessening or prevention of competition.

As the hon. member is well aware, the Competition Bureau conducts its merger reviews independently and confidentially, and it is not my place to comment on the status of Suncor's takeover of Petro-Canada. It would be inappropriate for the government to interfere in the processes of the Competition Bureau. I am confident that the Competition Bureau will perform due diligence in its review. Yet at the same time, my colleague is right to raise the broader issue of competitiveness in Canada. Obviously, competitiveness is of concern to all Canadians and to all members of the House.

As we all know, the current financial crisis and the general credit crunch are putting severe stress on the world economy, and economic activity in many countries is now contracting. This is negatively affecting Canada.

Our government was quick to react in order to improve Canada's competitiveness. We recognize that access to foreign markets is essential for a healthy economy. We are aggressively working to open markets abroad for Canadian goods, services and investment through the conclusion of ongoing trade negotiations. We are fighting protectionist sentiments among our trading partners and we intend to pursue new initiatives with the European Union.

The economic action plan released with budget 2009 addresses both the short-term downturn and financial constraints that are affecting consumers and businesses alike, as well as investing in Canada's long-term productivity.

The plan provides over \$20 billion in new tax relief over 2008-09 and the following five fiscal years, and launched the Canada skills and transition strategy to help Canadians weather the economic storm and provide them with the necessary training to prosper in a changing economy.

Looking beyond the current market turmoil, our focus will be on improving our productivity, as it is the fundamental determinant of our quality of life and our competitiveness.

The Government of Canada is strongly committed to fostering a competitive business environment by putting in place strategic support that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship and rewards investment.

● (1925)

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see the member brushed on some of the issue that I raised as a statement.

I am hoping that the Conservative Party will take upon itself the obligation of its first responsibility, which is to protect the interests of Canadians particularly as they relate to concentrated markets.

To avoid the concentration, several steps are going to have to be taken. Suncor should divest of all of its retail gasoline assets. This should be done in a city by city approach. Transfer of the pipelines which it runs through the TransCanada northern pipeline should also be considered to allow for a common carrier for other players to access. Terminal ports at Montreal run by Petro-Canada should be opened up.

It is extremely important that we not allow any more refineries in this country to shut down. The entire concern of the nation as it relates to the ability to provide energy adequately and to ensure adequate supply is at stake.

I urge the government to look at this far more intensely. I have seen the bureau give rubber stamps in the past as it did in the Superior propane case. I am hoping the government will not do it again here.

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Madam Speaker, I cannot comment on the ongoing work being done by the Competition Bureau, but what I can do is read a few quotes from outside sources that talk about Canada's approach to the global financial crisis.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

I have a quote from *Newsweek*, which talks about the banking system. Canada's banking system is ranked number one in the world. *Newsweek* said:

If President Obama is looking for smart government, there is much he, and all of us, could learn from our...neighbour to the north.

The London *Daily Telegraph* commented regarding G8 leadership:

Some will regard it as alarming that, in current times, world leadership should rest with Canada. But the Canadian Tories are a model of how to behave during a downturn.

They have kept spending and checking to reduce taxes.

The IMF recently stated:

—Canada is better placed than many countries to weather the global financial turbulence and worldwide recession.... [T]he authorities responded proactively to the crisis. The IMF supports the strong fiscal package announced in January, which was large, timely, and well-targeted—

REVENUE CANADA

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on March 10 in this House I asked a question to deal with the 850 fishers of Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec who have been taxed unfairly on the buyout of their fishing licences. They voluntarily participated in a program offered by the federal government in 1998. With the collapse of the ground fishery there was an opportunity for them to actually get out of the fishery and several hundred of them took advantage of this program.

What has transpired since is nothing short of a shame on the government because of the way these fishers have been treated. They knew they would have to pay capital gains tax on the buyout of their licences. That is not the issue. The issue is that for some of those fishers they were actually charged 25% tax on the capital gains while the other 850 were charged 100% tax on their capital gains. So the question is, why were they treated differently?

What they have been trying to do ever since is to get the government to acknowledge that there was an error made and the error was made when Revenue Canada informed the Department of Fisheries and Oceans that these fishers would indeed be taxed at 100% of their capital gains. Later it was learned that was not the case. DFO had only passed along the information that had been provided to it by Revenue Canada.

Upon learning that some of their colleagues, some of their fellow fishers, were in fact only taxed 25% on the capital gains, then of course these fishers came looking for money that was owed to them, money that had been collected by the government in this situation unfairly.

We have been trying for all of this time, going on 10 years now, to get the government to acknowledge that this is a mistake. It is a mistake it can fix quite easily if it wants to. We all know that governments can do things when they realize an egregious error has been made and in this case that is certainly what has happened. So we are trying again to make the government understand the situation.

It would appear from a response that I received to a petition that I presented on the very same issue, that somehow Revenue Canada seems to think that these fishers do not want to pay capital gains on the buyout of their licences and that is not the case.

It says in the response from TCC that the payments were taxable under the provisions of the act. They are not quarrelling with that. Of course they expect to pay tax. That is not the question. The issue is that they have been taxed unfairly. How anyone could look at the situation and not see that about 200 fishers were taxed 25% on the sale of their fishing licences and the remaining 850 were taxed at 100%. There is a problem here; an error was made.

We are asking the government to acknowledge this error, and forget the fact that it is before the courts because that is always used as an excuse of course when people do not want to deal with an issue, and in this case the government. It is a smokescreen. We are asking it to acknowledge there has been a mistake made and let us fix this once and for all and treat the fishers fairly like they are being asked of their government.

● (1930)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Random—Burin—St. George's and the fishers for sharing their concerns about the taxation of fishers who gave up their fishing licence under the Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program.

I want to point out that the Canada Revenue Agency is the custodian of very sensitive and confidential information provided to it by all taxpayers and benefit recipients.

We must handle this information very carefully, in accordance with the confidentiality provisions of the Income Tax Act.

In view of those provisions, which protect the information provided to us, we cannot publicly discuss the details of an individual taxpayer's case.

That said, I can appreciate that the fishers and their families have questions and feel frustrated about what can sometimes be a difficult process.

These men and women have said that income tax was incorrectly or unfairly applied to the payments they received from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

I must point out that this situation has been carefully examined by the Canada Revenue Agency since the late 1990s, and following the creation of the Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program.

Moreover, under due process of the law, the taxation issue was taken before the Tax Court of Canada, which announced its ruling on November 21, 2007.

The Tax Court of Canada confirmed that the payments received by the fishers under the Atlantic groundfish licence retirement program represented proceeds of the disposition of capital property and thus were taxable.

It is true that we do not always appreciate taxation rulings and sometimes challenge them.

Nevertheless, the fairness and integrity of Canada's tax system is based on uniform application of the law.

It applies to all of us in the same way, impartially, and is not subject to individual interpretation.

This is the only way to protect the integrity and the world-class standards of the Canada Revenue Agency. It is also the only way to protect all Canadians in order to ensure taxation equality.

It is important to note that the Income Tax Act includes objection and appeal rights for taxpayers who do not agree with their assessment.

Along the same lines, as per the legislation that guides our actions, the right to appeal must be exercised in a particular way and by a prescribed deadline.

The legislation also sets out the circumstances allowing extensions and the duration of extensions.

The Canada Revenue Agency does not have the discretionary power to grant objection and appeal rights beyond those set out in the Act.

Acting against the Income Tax Act would not only be illegal, but also undermine the system that ensures fair and equal treatment for millions of Canadian taxpayers.

• (1935)

[*English*]

**Ms. Judy Foote:** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has just reinforced the issue that there does not seem to be an understanding that this has nothing to do with paying the tax. Fishers know they have to pay capital gains on the buyout of their

#### *Adjournment Proceedings*

fishing licences. The issue is that they have been treated unfairly. One group paid 25%, the other group paid 100%. We are asking for the government to acknowledge that this was wrong.

Clearly, when we talk about uniform application, let us be uniform in applying the tax to all fishers and treat them the same. I know it is before the courts and fishers know it is before the courts.

We all know that when a mistake has been made, our government can in fact do the right thing. It can acknowledge that a mistake has been and that fishers have been treated unfairly. It can come to their aid and reimburse them the money that was taken from them—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order. I will have to interrupt the hon. member for a response from the parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Gourde:** Madam Speaker, there are many provisions in the Income Tax Act to help taxpayers comply with their obligation to pay taxes. Ignorance of the law is certainly not one of them.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have shared their concerns with me.

We will continue to work with these people and with all Canadians to ensure that they always receive the best possible professional services. That is how we have earned Canada's trust.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:38 p.m.)





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