



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, May 27, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 27, 2009

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### ECONOMIC SUMMIT

**Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my riding of Leeds—Grenville is looking ahead to the day when the economy has improved.

On June 12 there will be a one day economic summit in North Grenville that will be the kick-off to a series of meetings that will continue through next fall.

Initiated by Bob Runciman, our provincial member, and me, the event will be hosted by the united counties of Leeds and Grenville Economic Development Department in cooperation with the three community futures development corporations and the separated municipalities in Leeds and Grenville.

By this time next year, every sector of the economy in Leeds—Grenville will have a good look into the future. Each will have defined their obstacles to growth, their opportunities for growth and developed a plan to move forward.

I wish to take this opportunity to welcome those in Leeds—Grenville who support and will attend the June 12 summit. I look forward to working with them on this cooperative venture.

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### MISSISSAUGA CITY SUMMIT

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to attend the Mississauga City Summit of 200 business, labour, government and not-for-profit community leaders.

Four task forces were established on waterfront redevelopment and environmental sustainability, human and social services, post-secondary education, and finally, the creation of a centre of excellence for diversity and immigration.

David Suzuki was the evening's keynote speaker. Over 1,000 people convened to listen to the launch of the city's strategic plan and discuss the issues that are critical and affect the sustainable economic development of Mississauga, Canada's sixth, and Ontario's third, largest city, economic development which has been hindered by critical infrastructure funding which has not been released by the government.

The summit was an excellent example of civic society engaging together to improve their community. In this time of economic downturn, we need to encourage more communities to engage in this type of societal collaboration.

I want to congratulate the co-chairs for their initiative, and also thank Mayor Hazel McCallion for her involvement and all of the volunteers and sponsors who made the event the tremendous success that it was.

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[*Translation*]

### CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

**Mrs. Ève-Mary Thāi Thi Lac (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this week the Canadian Jewish Congress will be celebrating 90 years of existence. The first assembly of this official public voice of the Jewish community was held in 1919.

After a period of relative inactivity, the rise of anti-Semitism in Canada as well as in Europe in the 1930s convinced the community to make the CJC a permanent body in 1934. Montreal philanthropist Samuel Bronfman became its head at that time.

Since then, the Congress has played a vital role in defending and representing the interests of Canadian Jewry. It has also worked in conjunction with other groups on issues relating to the defence of religious and cultural minorities and of human rights. For example, the CJC was pleased with the recent Montreal court decision condemning the crimes against humanity committed in Rwanda in 1994.

The 29th plenary assembly will be one of the high points of this 90th anniversary year

The Bloc Québécois warmly congratulates the congress on its dedication.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**TOBACCO ADVERTISING**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I salute all those who helped bring to fruition important legislation that cracks down on tobacco marketing aimed at young people.

I thank all those involved, especially the women who saw the devastating impact of tobacco on health and the importance of acting to save lives: women such as Cynthia Callard at Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, who prodded all of us for years to eliminate the marketing of fruit- and candy-flavoured products and convinced me to introduce a private member's bill; young women such as youth public health specialist Angela McKercher-Mortimer who, with the Eastern Ontario Youth Coalition, helped coordinate the packages on members' desks today; women such as Jennifer McKibbin, who was a key organizer with Northwestern Youth Action Alliance in its Flavour...Gone! campaign and who continues to press for the inclusion of flavoured chew in the bill; and women such as our federal health minister, who made this the subject matter of a government bill and who has committed to shepherd Bill C-32 through Parliament.

Together, we absolutely refuse to let sinister packaging and deceptive flavourings turn today's youth into tomorrow's death statistics.

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**CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS**

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Jewish Congress will be celebrating its 90th anniversary at its Plenary Assembly in Toronto this Sunday, May 31.

The CJC was founded after the upheaval of the first world war to represent the interests of the Canadian Jewish community and to send help overseas to aid the desperate situation faced by Jews in eastern Europe at the time.

Since its inception, the CJC has pursued its aims of defence, advocacy and representation on behalf of the Canadian Jewish community, as well as Holocaust remembrance and restitution and support for Jewish communities around the world.

The CJC speaks out against injustices, no matter where they occur, understanding that the obligations of history demand no less.

I encourage all members to join me in wishing the Canadian Jewish Congress a happy 90th anniversary and a productive and successful 29th Plenary Assembly. I say to the CJC, *yasher koach*, may you go from strength to strength.

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**CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to salute the Canadian Jewish Congress on the historic occasion of its 90th anniversary.

The CJC is one of Canada's oldest, most distinguished and pioneering NGOs. It pioneered in the early organization, integration

and representation of the Jewish immigrant community. It led the way in Holocaust remembrance and the struggle against hatred, anti-Semitism and discrimination of any kind. It has been at the forefront of the struggle for human rights in general and minority rights in particular, including landmark contributions to the struggle for Soviet Jewry and Syrian Jewry. It has made a major contribution to the development of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the struggle against impunity.

As a former president of the Canadian Jewish Congress and as an MP engaged on these issues, I say on behalf of my colleagues and the Liberal Party, *yasher koach*, may you go from strength to strength.

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• (1410)

**RUGBY ON THE HILL**

**Mr. Greg Rickford (Kenora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, politics and sports share a long history of mutual comparison, but perhaps no sport closer resembles the reality of the House than the game of rugby. Like this House, rugby includes strong sides and weak sides, fronts and backs, the occasional mauling and, of course, frequent off-sides.

Like rugby, scrums are a frequent occurrence on the Hill, so it seems fitting that today at 6 p.m. there will be a scrum of a different kind when the Ottawa Irish meet the Forces Rugby on the Parliament Hill lawn for a charity match to raise money for the Military Families Fund. The exhibition will feature former Canadian champion Rod Snow, and the hon. member for Central Nova suiting up for the military squad. The Ottawa Irish will feature former Canadian team great Al Charron.

I hope all hon. members will join me today on the front lawn, rain or shine, to support Canada's military families.

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[Translation]

**TAX CREDIT FOR NEW GRADUATES**

**Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon there will be a vote at second reading on a bill providing a \$8,000 tax credit for new graduates working in designated regions. That bill got as far as the Senate during the last Parliament and was supported by a majority in this House.

Unfortunately, the election call precipitated by the Conservative government blocked its progress. However, some 60 municipalities, RCMs, youth forums, academic institutions, youth employment centres and chambers of commerce resolved that such a measure must be forthcoming.

I would therefore call upon the members of this House, and in particular the two Conservative members for Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean who are very familiar with this measure, to support this bill.

We need measures such as these to stop youth out-migration and promote the retention of skilled workers in economically depressed regions.

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[English]

#### BURMA

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the final day in the year-long extension of Burmese Nobel Laureate, honorary Canadian citizen and pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's five-year prison sentence. Today should have marked the first day of her renewed freedom. However, Burma's ruling junta has manufactured new charges on the eve of her release. Canada renews its calls upon General Than Shwe to unconditionally release Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Burmese junta's repressive policies have led to untold death and misery and created a refugee crisis in the neighbouring countries.

Canada strongly condemns the Burmese junta on the violation of basic human rights of the Burmese people.

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#### TAXATION

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, members of the Conservative Party and their leader continue to show that they have no clue how to help Canadian families during this economic downturn. Recently, the Conservative leader said that he is not going to bring in another budget “until we need to raise taxes”.

We thank the Conservative leader for finally being honest. Now we know that the Conservatives want to hike taxes on Canadian families during a global recession. We also know that they increased income taxes during their first budget and they put a devastating new tax on income trusts. The Conservatives and their leader seem to like taking money out of Canadians' pockets.

Will the Conservative leader stand in the House and finally come clean with Canadians? Which taxes will the Conservatives raise? By how much will they raise them? Who would be forced to pay these new taxes?

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#### TAXATION

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have become a single-issue party. The issue is taxes. They want them higher and they want more of them. Their leader is the father of the carbon tax. He has also made only one policy commitment: taxes will rise under the Liberals.

In these tough economic times, that is not what Canadians need. We need the stable and focused leadership that only this government can provide. While this government is standing up for hard-working Canadian families, the Liberals want to make it tougher for Canadians to take care of their families. The Liberals are clear. They want more taxes and higher taxes.

#### Statements by Members

That is just plain wrong. I know it is wrong. The people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound know it is wrong. This government knows it is wrong, and all Canadians certainly know it is wrong. It is only the Liberal leader who has not figured that part out yet.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

#### CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on May 31st, the Canadian Jewish Congress will celebrate its 90th anniversary at its national assembly in Toronto.

Since its inception in 1919, the Canadian Jewish Congress has represented the Jewish community on issues, including anti-Semitism, racism, Holocaust remembrance, and support for Jewish communities that are in need in this country and around the world.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I am proud to recognize and pay tribute to the Canadian Jewish Congress and to praise its role as a human rights organization concerned with the social justice and rights of all Canadians and the promotion of the values of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms at home and abroad.

The NDP wishes the Canadian Jewish Congress a happy 90th anniversary and a productive and successful 29th national assembly. To the CJC, *yasher koach*, may you go from strength to strength.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers do not really know this Liberal leader, but the one thing I can be sure of is that he wants to raise taxes. It is terrible to criticize when one has nothing better to offer other than tax increases in these tough times.

For every problem, the Liberal leader's solution is more taxes. He said so, himself, quite openly.

Whose taxes does the Liberal leader want to raise? The victims of the economic crisis? People in need? People in the forestry regions?

Canadians have good reason to wonder and to be worried. The Liberal leader still refuses to give any answers.

The Liberal Party's pretentious attitude towards Quebec is making a strong comeback in Ottawa, and we urge all Canadians and Quebecers to be wary of the real intentions of the Liberal Party, which wants power at all costs. Canadians will be left to pay the price with even higher taxes.

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#### MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 2007, after announcing plans to transfer some of its activities from Quebec to Ontario, ArcelorMittal announced the construction of a beam mill at Contrecoeur. Two years on, union members feel that it is time for the company to keep that promise. They have launched a large-scale regional mobilization to save the Quebec steel industry.

*Oral Questions*

What should the Government of Canada—which has been ignoring problems in Quebec's manufacturing industry for years—be doing?

It should go forward with the Bloc Québécois' proposal to create a \$4 billion fund to provide refundable investment credits to companies like ArcelorMittal that, because of declining production, have delayed planned investments. If they are encouraged to invest right away, they will be able to modernize their facilities and benefit fully from the economic recovery.

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**TAXATION**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Minister of National Revenue was asked if the Conservatives were planning to raise income taxes. He refused to answer.

He is refusing to answer questions about his hidden tax agenda. The guy who always has an answer for everything does not want to talk about it. I can understand his reluctance to talk about it, because there is sure to be plenty of criticism.

Will the Conservatives raise income and sales taxes? Who will suffer as a result? SMEs? The most vulnerable? The unemployed? The poor?

The minister should stand up and tell Parliament and all Canadians who will bear the brunt of his tax hikes. Once again, the Conservatives are showing their true colours.

[English]

Tory times are tough times.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government's economic action plan is delivering real results for Canadians. They have asked for leadership from their federal government, and that is what we are providing.

At this critical time, when families need it the most, we are reducing taxes on Canadians, creating jobs, and helping Canadians who are hardest hit by the global recession.

Canadians will benefit from an additional \$20 billion in personal income tax relief. Those who have lost their jobs are now eligible for five additional weeks of employment insurance. Canadians are benefiting from investments in skills and transition, which facilitates finding jobs in the new economy.

Meanwhile, the Liberal leader has said, "We will have to raise taxes". This irresponsible tax hike policy is not what Canadians need during this recession.

The leader of the Liberal Party should stand up in the House today and come clean with Canadians and tell them which taxes he will raise, by how much he will raise them, and who will be forced to pay these taxes.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

• (1420)

[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in September the government said there would be no recession, in October no deficits, in November it promised a surplus, but in January it brought down a \$34 billion deficit. Yesterday, the deficit ballooned to \$50 billion, all in a breathtaking six months, and still the money has not gotten out the door. This is incompetence on a historic scale.

How can the Prime Minister, or any other Canadian, still have confidence in the Minister of Finance?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that over the last few months the financial situations have deteriorated in all countries due to the recession.

The fact of the matter is that our deficits in Canada are a third to a quarter of the size of the deficit in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan. These deficits are affordable. What we are doing is borrowing money at historically low interest rates to help unemployed people, to build infrastructure. That is what we should be doing and what we will continue to do.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the issue here is the credibility of the Government of Canada and the credibility of the Minister of Finance.

Just five weeks ago, the Minister of Finance said, and I quote, "I'm comfortable with our projections... We're on track". We are on track to where? The largest deficit in Canadian history. Canadians just cannot trust the government with their money.

Will the Prime Minister fire the Minister of Finance?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is at issue here is the credibility of the Leader of the Opposition, who has been here week after week demanding not just that the government spend more but that it spend more permanently. Now he tries to pretend he is concerned about the deficit.

I cannot fire the Leader of the Opposition, and with all the tapes I have on him, I do not want to.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, fortunately—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, fortunately, the Prime Minister cannot fire me. He should fire the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, the deficit ballooned to \$50 billion. It is the largest deficit in our history. This is incompetence on a historic scale.

When will the Prime Minister fire his Minister of Finance?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while unemployment and the recession worsen, this government and this Minister of Finance are spending more on infrastructure helping communities and the unemployed. This policy is entirely proper, and we intend to pursue it.

• (1425)

[*English*]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in his last budget the finance minister projected a \$34 billion deficit and he said the money must be flowing within 120 days. Today is that day, and where do we stand? The deficit has mushroomed to more than \$50 billion, and according to media headlines, “Lots of announcements, but little money”.

How can the Prime Minister have confidence in his \$50 billion man, a finance minister who has clearly lost the confidence of Canadians?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, who Canadians have lost confidence in are the Liberals.

On the one hand the Liberals say, “spend more money”, and on the other hand they say, “don’t run a deficit” and “don’t increase the deficit”; this, from the member for Markham—Unionville who does not even know what kind of car he drives.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is the voice of failure.

[*Translation*]

In November, the Minister of Finance refused to see that the economy was in trouble. He predicted nothing but a surplus. Six months later, he has created the biggest deficit in Canada’s history. It is clear that he is incompetent.

Does the Prime Minister not think that it is important for Canadians to have confidence in their finance minister? If so, then why is he keeping him on as minister?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, how can the people of Canada have confidence in the Liberals when they say this would be the largest deficit in Canadian history when it is not.

The deficits in the 1980s and 1990s, as members opposite should know, if they were living in the country at the time, approached 6% of GDP. That is what was going on in the 1980s and 1990s in this country.

This deficit is more in the neighbourhood of 3% of GDP. The deficit is affordable. It is necessary for Canada. We are doing the right things now when Canadians need these things done.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before and during the last election campaign, the Prime Minister stubbornly denied the existence of any crisis. He then even presented an ideological statement about dealing with the crisis, promising a surplus. A few months ago, his Minister of Finance was talking about a \$34 billion deficit, and yesterday he admitted that it would be \$50 billion instead. Today there are 1.5 million people

unemployed and half of them are not receiving employment insurance benefits.

Was the Prime Minister totally incompetent in not seeing the signs of a looming economic crisis, or did he want to conceal the economic reality in order not to compromise his chances of being re-elected?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not understand just where the leader of the Bloc has been the past few months, since November. All of the G20 countries are in agreement on spending, creating deficits, and implementing measures to stimulate our economies. We spend more when the recession hits the unemployed harder. That is why the deficit is bigger. We are spending more for the communities and for the unemployed and will continue to do so.

Unfortunately, the Bloc voted against those measures for the communities and for the unemployed.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I know that in October I was out campaigning against this Prime Minister, who was telling all Canadians and all Quebecers that there was no crisis. He said so in two debates. That was the Prime Minister’s attitude, denying reality. The measures he got adopted in his budget with the Liberals’ backing are inadequate.

What is the Prime Minister waiting for before presenting a real set of measures which would help out the unemployed and business, while at the same time stimulating the economy?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, according to the Minister of Finance, it is clear that we are spending more for the unemployed, communities, and infrastructure. This is essential, and necessary. Canada can afford to do so during a recession. What is inexplicable is that the Bloc is calling for those things yet votes against these measures for our communities and our people.

• (1430)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the anticipated \$50 billion deficit is the result of the failure of the Conservatives’ so-called economic plan, which was supported by the Liberals. It is not true that the government is spending more. The problem is that revenues are falling. That is proof of the failure of the Conservatives’ economic plan. Using the deficit as a pretext for refusing to take action to deal with the crisis is a recipe for certain economic and financial disaster.

When will the Prime Minister wake up, realize the extent of the crisis and implement a real recovery plan?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the economic action plan is in place. Money is flowing. Access to credit is increasing. The bond market is functioning well. Credit markets are functioning better. All of this is as a result of the economic action plan which we brought in with the earliest budget in Canadian history.

It is true that the recession is deeper than anticipated. It is true that we are spending billions of dollars more on unemployment, on people in need of benefits to help cushion the impact of the recession. We think that is the right thing to do for Canadians.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has the means to take action. As the Prime Minister stated earlier, Canada's debt is the lowest of all G7 countries and the forecast deficit is also the lowest. However, the Conservative's economic pseudo-plan is one of the weakest in the industrialized world. The government has the means and the duty to take action.

What is the government waiting for to help workers and industries in trouble by introducing a second recovery plan that corresponds to the demands of Quebec, workers, businesses and the Bloc Québécois?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have probably the largest stimulus package in the G7. The IMF confirmed that. This is in cooperation with the provinces and the territories, which are doing even more than we asked them to do. All of the governments in this country are cooperating in order to stimulate the Canadian economy. I do not quite understand the member opposite when he says "spend more", since he voted against the initial stimulus package.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the NDP has been predicting since the beginning of the year, the Minister of Finance confirmed yesterday that his deficit will beat the record set by Brian Mulroney. In fact, the Conservative government is about to beat all the records for poor economic performance.

With their bad decisions, the Liberals and the Conservatives have contributed to a structural deficit.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his past decisions have contributed to the current woes?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the deficits of other countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan, are two or three times greater than Canada's deficit. Our deficit is manageable and serves to help communities and workers. I do not understand why the New Democratic Party is voting against these measures for citizens in a period of recession.

*[English]*

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the reckless tax cuts to the big profitable banks and the oil corporations, that were brought in by the government and in fact by Paul Martin and the Liberals prior, have left us without the financial capacity to respond when Canadians need us the most, and now we have the biggest deficit in Canadian history.

The chief economist of the Toronto-Dominion Bank, Don Drummond, says that the decisions over the past 10 years have created this structural problem. The fact is the Conservatives have simultaneously created the biggest deficit since Mulroney and at the same time they have thousands of unemployed people who cannot get help. Will he not finally admit that he got it wrong?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all of the factors contributing to the deficit, including the rise of the deficit, are short-term factors. They are not long-term factors; they are short-term factors. There are rising payments to the

unemployed, because of the things we are doing to help unemployed people in this country, and rising payments to communities, to the auto sector.

We are also experiencing lower tax revenues including lower corporate tax revenues, not because of corporate tax cuts but because corporations are not making profits. But it should not worry the leader of the NDP because when he was in the coalition, he was all for corporate tax cuts anyway.

● (1435)

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, even the banks who received the corporate tax cuts agree that those tax cuts have caused the structural deficit situation in this country.

One would think with such a big deficit the Prime Minister might be able to point to some results, but the truth is we have another confirmation today that the infrastructure money is just a bunch of announcements. It is not making it out the door. In fact, even federal projects in the exclusive federal jurisdiction to the tune of \$462 million have not been approved. Bridges and railway projects and harbours, the money is not flowing. When is the Prime Minister going to get it out the door?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP demands the government should do deficit spending one day and the next day he says we should not. One day he is for corporate tax cuts and the next day he is not. One day he is demanding we bring in improvements to employment insurance and infrastructure, and when we do that he votes against it and says we are spending too much money.

There was a day when the NDP used to stand for something. Now it is just against everything.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my own province of Quebec, thousands of aerospace workers have lost their jobs in this economic crisis that that Conservative finance minister has so badly managed. What does he offer to these unemployed workers? The biggest deficit in Canadian history and no better access to employment insurance.

How does that Conservative finance minister have any credibility with these unemployed workers today?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is just more Liberal hypocrisy. The Liberals had no ideas coming up to the budget. We asked them for their ideas for the economic action plan. We got nothing.

The only idea we have heard since the budget, since the economic action plan, is a plan to raise taxes for Canadians which is the last thing that should happen in the middle of a recession.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there speaks the voice of failure.



*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

Throughout Quebec, paper mills and saw mills have locked their doors and sent thousands of workers home. This Minister of Finance has racked up the largest deficit in Canadian history and has not found one cent to help these workers.

What credibility could this Minister of Finance have with forestry workers who today are unemployed and have no employment insurance benefits?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** The member opposite, Mr. Speaker, is saying, I think, spend more money to help people who are losing their jobs and help them retrain. That is exactly what we did in Canada's economic action plan. Billions of dollars are being spent in the budget to support people who need retraining, who need opportunities to re-enter the workforce.

Even more than that, since the budget, given the depth of the recession, billions more are going out to help people who are losing their jobs. Is that not what the member wants?

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Wascana has the floor. We will have to have some order. He is about to ask a question and someone is going to want to respond and has to be able to hear it. Order.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not inspired by a Conservative government that is so consistently dead wrong; wrong about the recession, wrong about a fictitious surplus, wrong about no deficit in November, even more wrong about the deficit in January, wrong by 48% at least. Worst still, these Conservatives are wrong about the jobs they promised to Canadians, wrong by 540,000, and many victims cannot get employment insurance.

Therefore, we have \$50 billion in red ink, no new jobs and no better access to EI. Why?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as Canadians know, we are in the midst of a global recession. It is a deeper recession than anticipated. Fortunately, as the IMF confirmed on Friday in its report on Canada, Canada entered the recession in the strongest position of any country in the G7, and Canada will exit the recession in a strong position because of the steps we have taken in Canada's economic action plan.

Canadians know this. Canadians know that we are better off than other countries. Canadians know that our financial system is solid and so is our fiscal situation.

● (1440)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is the man who created a deficit before the recession.

This morning the Minister of National Revenue, the Conservative tax collector, was asked specifically to rule out tax increases by the government. He would not do it. Asked to be unequivocal on taxes

his confused answer was “we're not there”; in other words, not unequivocal.

Remember when Conservatives promised never to tax income trusts. That promise was broken. They stabbed two and a half million innocent Canadians in the back.

How can Conservatives be believed on the deficit or taxes, or anything else that involves trust?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the only idea we have heard from the Liberals since the budget is their idea that taxes need to be raised. That is from the Leader of the Opposition.

However, there is another idea today. The finance critic opposite says there might be certain measures that the Conservatives are doing that the Liberals would think would not be worth doing, things that they think are not necessary. So, the question is, what would the Liberals cut? The home renovation tax credit? Infrastructure investments? Employment insurance benefits? Investments in agriculture? Health care funding like they did in the 1990s to the provinces, to the sick, to the elderly, to students and children—

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada sets the number of unemployed at close to \$1.5 million. The latest figures show more than 680,000 unemployment insurance recipients, which is a 10.6% jump over the month of March. However, with only 46% of unemployed receiving EI, we can see there is an accessibility problem. By lowering the minimum number of hours to 360 hours, a greater number of unemployed would be helped. Everyone can understand that.

Why then is the minister refusing to understand it?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Bloc Québécois are continuing to be unreasonable. On the one hand, they are criticizing the size of the deficit, while on the other they are constantly proposing measures to make it bigger still.

*Oral Questions*

The Bloc Québécois cannot attack us by saying we have not done anything for the unemployed. First of all, we have added five weeks of employment insurance. Second, we are giving 18 more weeks of work-sharing, and third we are giving \$3 billion for training, \$500 million of which we have just announced. This will enable laid-off workers to receive up to two years of employment insurance.

They voted against it.

**Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after the Conservative disinformation process finishes with the economy, it moves on to unemployment. Stating as the minister has, that 360 hours would give a person 52 weeks of employment insurance is quite simply false.

Instead of clutching onto the unfair system put in place by the Liberals in the 1990s, what is the minister waiting for before bringing in a true EI reform that would meet the needs of the unemployed?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our measure gives an additional five weeks of employment insurance benefits. That means that a person who was entitled to 30 weeks will get five more weeks with the measure the Conservative government has put in place.

Do we know the estimated number of persons who were going to benefit from that measure? It has been estimated at 400,000. They were proposing two additional weeks, which would have meant those people would have had nothing more. We are giving five more weeks—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Hochelaga.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is stubbornly pursuing its completely repressive agenda. With Bill C-31, it wants to pass legislation with a provision that would allow police officers to photograph and fingerprint anyone who is arrested, before it is even decided whether charges will be brought against them.

How can this government reconcile its abusive approach with the presumption of innocence, which is recognized in the Quebec and Canadian charters?

• (1445)

[*English*]

**Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing that Canadians know they can count on from this government, it is to stand up for the rights of victims, to stand up for the rights of law-abiding citizens, to take the criminal justice situation in this country seriously, and to do what it takes to protect Canadian society.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is another example of the Conservatives' lack of transparency. True to form, they are trying to put a poison pill in this bill, which is generally supported by the opposition. This provision is unacceptable. The government must remove it.

Will the Minister of Justice remove that provision from the bill?

[*English*]

**Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have introduced a very important piece of legislation that is this government's latest step in tackling crime. It includes the right of police to fingerprint a person who has been arrested for a serious indictable offence, such as murder, kidnapping and sexual assault. If the hon. member has a problem with that, I encourage him to explain it to his constituents.

\* \* \*

**THE BUDGET**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 36 days ago, on April 21, the Minister of Finance said, "I'm comfortable with our projections. I'm staying with our budget projection. We're on track".

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance a very simple question. Do we believe the Minister of Finance who spoke on April 21 or are we to believe the Minister of Finance who speaks today about a budget deficit that is completely different? What is the answer to that simple question?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, particularly since I know he is an expert on deficits from his time in Ontario.

The plain fact is that the world economic recession is deeper than anticipated. Fortunately, Canada entered the recession in a strong position because of strong fiscal policies. We paid off almost \$40 billion worth of debt in the first three years of this government. That puts Canada, as Canadians know, in the best position to weather the storm.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, having dined out on me for 15 years, the minister will perhaps understand why some of us want to have one simple meal with respect to what he has done and what he has said.

The simple fact is that 36 days ago the Minister of Finance said, "I'm comfortable with our projections. I'm staying with our budget projection. We're on track". How could he have gotten it so wrong just 36 days ago?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is the member opposite opposed to? Is he opposed to Canada taking the necessary measures to help our country get through the recession?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The Minister of Finance has the floor and there seems to be excessive noise on every which side. The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, it appears that the bellowing of the member for Toronto Centre is contagious to his seatmates.

As I was saying, is the member against additional employment insurance benefits being paid? They are being paid in the billions, which, of course, increases the deficit, but that is a good thing to do because that is what Canadians need right now. It is the right thing to do.

Similarly in the auto sector, it is the right thing to do. Is the member against us helping the auto sector?

\* \* \*

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, fishermen in Atlantic Canada to forestry workers in British Columbia, Canadians, through no fault of their own, are losing their jobs and they are not eligible for EI.

Three weeks ago, the finance minister said that he was willing to work with opposition parties to fix EI and stimulate the economy. Those suggestions were totally dismissed by the Prime Minister. Obviously the Prime Minister has no confidence in his finance minister.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and replace the finance minister?

• (1450)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we added billions of dollars to the EI program. What we will not do is what the Liberal Party proposes to do, which is increase taxes, increase payroll taxes by putting in a premium hike.

The Liberals took the 360 plan and stole the NDP plan. In referring to the plan in a news release, they said, “This will result in an employment insurance premium hike”.

We will not do that. We will invest money to help Canadians. We will surely get through this but we will not do what they propose and that is increase taxes.

\* \* \*

#### FINANCE

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday he said that the deficit would be \$50 billion or more. How much more?

We cannot believe the minister on the previous estimate. Why should we believe him on this number? Since we cannot believe either number, will he do the decent thing and resign?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear once again. Canada is responding to a global recession from a position of fiscal strength. Our debts are low and our deficits are manageable and affordable compared to other countries. That deficit has gone up because the recession is deeper. If the recession gets deeper, we will do more to help the unemployed and to help people.

The hypocrisy of the leader of the Liberal Party is breathtaking. He cannot decry a deficit when he comes here and demand spending, not just this year but permanently.

#### Oral Questions

#### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while our Conservative government has a real plan for the economy that includes lower taxes, the Liberal leader has only one idea. What is it? He complains that Canadians are not paying enough taxes. This is discredited tax and spend and tax again liberalism. Let me quote the Liberal leader, “We will have to raise taxes”. What taxes? How much? When? The sky is the limit.

Could the government please inform the House what the IMF said just last week about our economic leadership?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader boasts that he is “Not going to take a GST hike off the table”. On the contrary, we are lowering taxes. We are keeping them low.

The International Monetary Fund said last week that the January 2009 fiscal package was appropriately “large, timely, well diversified and structured for maximum effectiveness”. The IMF observed that this commitment to prudence, along with a strong track record of budgetary responsibility, underpinned Canada’s—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Outremont.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CANADA PENSION PLAN INVESTMENT BOARD

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board will be releasing its annual report tomorrow. We already know that they have lost a record-breaking \$24 billion. But what Canadians really want to know is how much the top executives intend to pay themselves in bonuses this year. Last year, despite losses, managers and executives had the nerve to pay themselves \$11 million in bonuses.

Will the Minister of Finance take a stand for once in his life and say no to the theft of workers’ savings?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker. I do not have the power to do that, as the member opposite should know.

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board is separate from the political process. The provinces and the Government of Canada, as finance ministers, work together. We arrange to appoint a board but the board and the management operate the investments and conduct the business of the Canada pension plan. It has been a very successful plan over the years.

I think most Canadians would prefer that politicians, including the member for Wascana, keep their hands out of the till.

• (1455)

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, he was with all of the provincial financial ministers this week. That is not an excuse.

### Oral Questions

Tomorrow, the CPP Investment Board will be releasing its annual report. In a press release last week, it announced its unprecedented losses of \$24 billion. The same release also makes it clear that despite those record losses and despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of Canadians have lost their jobs, it has every intention of paying itself bonuses again this year.

Precisely how much does the board need to lose before the government stops it from paying itself bonuses?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was with all of the provincial and territorial finance ministers earlier this week and we spent more than a day together. We conducted the triennial review of the Canada pension plan. We unanimously supported the work that has been done by the plan on behalf of Canadians and reaffirmed our intention not to politically interfere with the Canada pension plan.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### ARTS AND CULTURE

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' cuts to culture are really hurting artists. This summer, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens will be touring in the Middle East, but because of the Conservatives' negligence, they will have a \$150,000 shortfall.

The director of Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Alain Dancyger, criticized the situation, saying, "It is embarrassing to have to ask for money in a country like Egypt. It is unacceptable that we should have to accept donations from Egyptian companies because our own country, a G8 nation, cannot support us".

Will the Conservative government finally listen to reason and restore funding for the programs it cut?

[English]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that les Grands Ballets will be going on its middle eastern tour. Our government is very supportive of the les Grands Ballets Canadiens.

"How supportive?", you ask, Mr. Speaker. That is a great question and I am glad you asked me that. This year alone les Grands Ballets will receive \$1.5 million from the endowment fund, which is more than three times what it received under the Liberal Party. That is how much this party has given.

That is not all, Mr. Speaker. It will also receive \$1.2 million from the Canada Council for the Arts this year and next. That is more, because we are putting more money into the Canada Council for the Arts. The Bloc does not care about the arts.

[Translation]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Stéphane Lemardelé is a well-known artist from my riding who has been invited to participate in *Portrait du Québec* at Saint-Jean des Arts in France this summer. Mr. Lemardelé will be hosting a week-long showcase of Quebec arts. Canadian Heritage told him that none of their programs applied to him.

Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages admit that his programs do not meet artists' needs, and will he support this exceptional artist instead of stubbornly refusing to do anything?

[English]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to get up on this issue.

What will not help artists in Quebec is the Bloc stimulus plan. It will not help them at all because when we flip through this, there is nothing in here that supports arts and culture.

However, where there is a lot of support for arts and culture is in the government's economic action plan which contains record funding for the arts and culture and the Bloc voted against it. The Bloc members can explain that to Quebecers when they try to explain this.

\* \* \*

### FISHING INDUSTRY

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, fisher, Kevin Nash, is getting the lowest price in 20 years for his lobster catch. He cannot break even. In Quebec and throughout Atlantic Canada the story is the same. At the same time, these fishers are watching the minister mismanage the finances of Canada. A lot of these people will soon be out of work without qualifying for employment insurance.

Could the Minister of Finance explain to those struggling Canadians why he should not be out of work as well?

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to supporting fishers, our government is there. We have provided access to credit to many fishers and many fishing businesses over the last six months. We have established the community adjustment fund, which allowed us to invest \$10 million in lobster marketing for eastern Canada. We supported the development of a lobster council.

We have doubled the budget for small craft harbours. We are spending record amounts of money upgrading our Coast Guard fleet, which assists the fishing industry.

We are the same government that provided \$750,000—

● (1500)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all these announcements are for tomorrow's money. They do not help for today.

The government can tell us all it wants that it will deliver money for marketing of lobsters, for example, just like it told us we would not have a deficit.

However, on this side of the House we want to hear and Canadians need to hear what the government will do. Will it give us a new Minister of Finance, one who actually cares about Canadians and is competent enough to deliver?

*Points of Order*

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to explain for the hon. member the relationship between supply and demand and why it was so important to invest in marketing money for the lobster industry.

Advertising impacts the buying behaviour of people. The buying behaviour of people affects demand and increased demand brings an increased price. That is why we have invested in the lobster industry.

\* \* \*

**CANADA-U.S. BORDER**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, after days of talks, we saw the minister do everything in his power to capitulate to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano. The minister is trying to make surrendering our sovereignty sound like a success. He is helping to facilitate the militarization and thickening of the Canada-U.S. border by agreeing to gun boats, black hawk helicopters, drone planes, fences and spy planes.

Could the minister explain why he is giving up our sovereignty and damaging our tourism and trade?

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite just cannot understand that we have a great relationship with our partners to the south. It has grown since this party took power. It does not matter which party is in power in the United States. Today's meeting between our minister and the homeland security secretary was a great meeting to build those bridges across our country and their country. I do not know what he could find wrong with it.

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**ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let us go from southern sovereignty to northern sovereignty.

The government boasts about promoting Arctic sovereignty, yet it has not appointed anyone to the Canadian Polar Commission, the lead agency on the Arctic. The commission promotes knowledge of the polar regions, enhances Canada's international profile and recommends policy direction. It has had no board and no chair since October 2008. The ad campaign promoting the Arctic in Europe is kind of hard to take seriously when the government has not been able to appoint people to the board that leads Canada's promotion.

Will the minister simply explain why the lack of leadership, where are the members of the board and where the heck is the chair?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell the member where the leadership is on the north. The leadership on the north is on this side of the House.

It is a pleasure to say that we have announced in the budget and have already allocated \$85 million for science research projects. We have announced \$200 million for housing projects in the north. We have announced the permanent research station in the north.

We continue to work with our northern partners because we believe, on this side of the House, that northern sovereignty is not negotiable. We take it seriously, like all Canadians will.

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**TRADE**

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in these challenging economic times, it is even more important than ever to open new doors for Canadian businesses. That is why our Conservative government has been busy negotiating new free trade agreements, like our agreement with Colombia, which is currently before the House.

Could the Minister of International Trade please explain to the House why our agreement with Colombia is so important to the prosperity of both countries?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we presently have about \$1.3 billion in two-way trade with Colombia, but that can increase with a free trade agreement. That would mean more production in Canada and more investment. The bottom line is more jobs.

Colombia has made significant strides ahead in human rights. Our agreement binds it to the International Labour Organization and all those standards, unlike other agreements it has signed with other countries. If we do not get that agreement, other countries that have signed agreements with Colombia will have a competitive edge in their products.

The foreign minister from Colombia will be here this week. I invite members opposite to engage with him on those issues. We have a great opportunity here to see progress for Colombia and for Canada with this free trade agreement.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

[Translation]

**POINT OF ORDER**

## ORDER AND DECORUM IN THE HOUSE

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order pursuant to Standing Order 10 of the House of Commons, which states at the beginning: "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum, and shall decide questions of order."

We must consider the fact that time is immutable and that the Standing Orders set out that question period takes place from Monday to Thursday between 2:15 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. The quota of questions from each party is determined by the results of the last general election and reflects the representation of each party here in the House of Commons.

*Points of Order*

The members of this House, as well as those listening in the gallery and watching question period on television, all witnessed the standing ovations specifically from the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. I am weighing my words and I can confirm this. We counted the number of standing ovations by these two parties that we saw today. Given the number of these ovations and the fact that time is immutable, as I stated earlier, this has deprived the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, yesterday and today, of the opportunity to put a question that had been negotiated on the basis of the quotas established according to the results of the last election.

As proof, I will tell you how many standing ovations have taken place today. There have been six standing ovations by the Conservative Party. There have been four by the Liberal Party. There have been none by the Bloc Québécois or the NDP.

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

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** The Liberals and Conservatives can go ahead and make fun of what I am saying, but I want to warn you right now, Mr. Speaker, that if you, as the person responsible for maintaining decorum, do not rule immediately on these standing ovations that are depriving us of our democratic right, there will be standing ovations by the Bloc Québécois and the NDP during upcoming question periods.

This situation has been raised repeatedly at the weekly meetings of the House leaders and whips and in informal discussions among the whips, but to no avail. If the Liberals and Conservatives think that this adds lustre to the work of Parliament and MPs, they are sadly mistaken. They should ask their constituents whether they agree with this sort of behaviour, which is more what one would expect from braggarts. That is what they look like, a bunch of braggarts.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest a way of dealing with this situation.

● (1510)

If a party abuses standing ovations, under the discretionary authority you have by virtue of the Standing Orders, you should cut some of the Conservatives' planted questions or eliminate some of the Liberals' allotted questions so that we can have our quota of questions.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons on the same point of order.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to use up too much time of the House, but all of a sudden it is such a big concern to my colleague across the way. I merely want to point out that you have a very difficult job, and all of us recognize that, in trying to maintain decorum, especially on Wednesdays and especially during question period.

I would point out for my colleague across the way that other things happen in question period that delay it and that delay the

natural unfolding of the questions and the answers by the government, in addition to standing ovations, which he seems to be so incensed about. I hope his heart is all right today because he certainly was very worked up. I would hate to see anything bad happen.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, in your decision that the clock had run out, we noticed that all four political parties were impacted equally by that, that each of us had one question with no supplementary left in the agreed-upon lineup. The fact is everyone was impacted that way.

I point out for my hon. colleague from the Bloc Québécois that when there is a lot of hollering and heckling, when individuals resort to unparliamentary language, which creates a huge furor in the chamber, it makes it extremely difficult for you, Mr. Speaker, to manage question period and it always results in delays, similar with standing ovations.

I merely point out there are other reasons that make it difficult for you, Mr. Speaker, to maintain control than standing ovations. I would hope that from time to time members would want to show support for their leader and for others in their caucus.

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to support my Bloc Québécois colleague. The time allotted for question period is very limited. We have 45 minutes to ask questions. We have 35 seconds to ask a question and 35 seconds to respond to a question. If the government and the official opposition enjoy supporting their leaders by giving standing ovations, this wastes time. We are the ones who lose out on our democratic right to ask questions here in the House. We lost the opportunity to ask questions yesterday and again today.

Is that what my hon. Conservative colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, wants? Does he believe in democracy? Does he believe that the opposition has the right to ask the government questions? Or is this a tactic to prevent the opposition parties in the House of Commons from asking the government questions, because it is afraid of having to provide answers to Canadians?

Mr. Speaker, my suggestion to you, since you will have to make the decision, is that you hold a meeting with the four whips of the four political parties to come up with a solution. That is within your mandate. If people are going to play such games here in the House, take control, Mr. Speaker. If you think you do not have control, we know you have it. So cut off the question and move on to the next political party, who otherwise might miss the opportunity to ask their question.

If they want to stand up during their allotted time, let them do so and they can have their fun. We, however, have questions to ask the government and we have the right to ask them. We have the right to get some answers and we do not want those answers stolen from us by anyone.

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will make a quick comment on the same point of order. The Conservative member who has just spoken is trying to mislead you, because in fact what the Bloc Québécois whip has said is correct: the Bloc and the NDP are the ones who have been deprived of their time.

You do indeed have a difficult task. You are asked to apply the rules we have set for ourselves. But those rules are a reflection of our democracy and of the latest election results. Because of the systematic misconduct of the Liberals and Conservatives, who are acting like endlessly clapping circus seals, we are being deprived of our democratic rights. We are therefore asking you to intervene.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ridicule never killed anyone. I would encourage the hon. member for Outremont and his cheerleaders to compete in the 2009 Parliamentary talent show. This year, we will have a Just for Laughs festival in Ottawa. We are entitled to ask questions. If people's reaction is enthusiastic, they should stop seeing that as some sort of plot. If these members are not able to get to their feet because they are not asking the right questions, that is their problem, but I do not need anyone defining democracy for me.

**The Speaker:** The Chair has heard enough. I must point out that there is virtually nothing in the rules about the content of question period. For example, there is nothing requiring each question and each answer to take only 35 seconds. It merely states that 45 minutes are allocated for the entire question period, nothing more.

The order of questions is not set out in the rules. That is something that is worked out by the House leaders. The list is submitted to the Chair after an agreement among the parties in this House.

[*English*]

The order of this list was changed at the beginning of this Parliament to reflect the makeup of the House, the size of the parties in the House and so on. I was not party to those discussions. Those were settled by the parties themselves. It has been that way since before I was elected Speaker for the first time, in 2001.

This is not a new procedure as far as I am concerned. When I was a student there was no order prescribed. The Speaker chose who got to ask the questions from whichever party and he enforced whatever time limit he felt was reasonable. That was taken away by agreement among the parties in the House. It was not by changes in the rules, but by agreement. We have that agreement today.

[*Translation*]

If the hon. Bloc Québécois whip does not like the order that has been agreed to, he needs to negotiate it with his colleagues. It is not up to me to set the order.

[*English*]

The rules have been set by the House leaders themselves. They agreed on this list, and I am only following the list that is there. I agree that if time gets taken up we can lose questions at the end, but sometimes we get extra and I am not told to cut it off when we get to a certain point. I am told to continue until the 45 minutes are gone.

Yesterday, we lost four questions on what I would call the normal list. Today, we lost four questions on what I would call the normal

list. There was one from each of the four parties in those four questions.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

I am not here to decide who has lost questions and who has not. I have the list here before me. I followed the list given to me by the parties in the House. It is not my choice. I did not decide who would ask questions and who would not.

[*English*]

I know that time gets wasted with applause. I would be all in favour of eliminating applause, whether it is standing or not. However, it is not my choice. Members do it, unfortunately. I usually use the time to announce the name of the next person who is going to speak, but sometimes it takes longer than that.

I encourage hon. members to maintain order in the House during question period. We would get through more questions, if that is what members want. We would get through more questions if the questions were shorter and the answers were shorter. However, it seems that most members prefer to use most of the 35 seconds that are allotted for the purpose.

I am not being critical of this. I am simply stating what I think is obvious. I would suggest that if hon. members feel that some change is needed in this list, they have a chat at the House leaders' or whips' meeting, which I am sure will happen again next Tuesday. If they make a change to the list, as your humble servant I will of course follow the changes dictated to me by the House leaders in that respect.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I hope you are not happy with the behaviour of the members in the House of Commons today.

**The Speaker:** It was very loud.

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## 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 response to one petition.

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Moldova.

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two reports today.

*Routine Proceedings*

First, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Visit of the Science and Technology Committee and the Economics and Security Committee Sub-Committee on East-West Economic Co-Operation and Convergence in Lithuania.

Second, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the 70th Rose-Roth Seminar in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF) respecting its participation at the seminar of the United Nations Development Program and the meeting of the Political Committee of the APF, held in Luang Prabang, Laos, on April 8 and 9, 2009.

[*English*]

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have three reports.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in London, United Kingdom, March 7, 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 Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in United Kingdom, September 15, 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 Parliamentary Delegation to the Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Twelve Plus Group, Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in London, United Kingdom, March 2, 2009.

\* \* \*

• (1525)

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on International Trade on Bill C-24, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Peru, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Peru and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Peru, with amendment.

### 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: report 11, on Chapter 1, A Study of Federal Transfers to Provinces and Territories of the December 2008 Report of the Auditor General of Canada; and report 12, on Chapter 5, Surveillance of Infectious Diseases, Public Health Agency of Canada of the May 2008 report of the Auditor General of Canada.

### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

In accordance with its order of reference of Thursday, February 26, 2009, the committee has considered vote 15, the Chief Electoral Officer under Privy Council in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010 and reports the same.

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### CANADA PENSION PLAN

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-396, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan (deductions — disabled child).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the Canada pension plan has been one of the great pillars of this nation for many decades. This private member's bill attempts to build in a bit of compassion for those who take the time out of the workforce to look after a disabled child. It allows for the calculation of the contributor's average monthly pensionable earnings for the deduction of months in which a contributor remained at home in order to care for that particular disabled child.

It is an honour to present this on behalf of the constituents of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

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

\* \* \*

### CITIZENSHIP ACT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-397, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (persons born abroad).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Citizenship Act for persons born abroad, which has been seconded by the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

The purpose of the bill is to restore equality for all Canadians. On April 17, some very young, internationally adopted children suddenly became lesser Canadians. On that same day some children born abroad will be stripped of their right to inherit their Canadian parents' citizenship.

It is not fair to create two levels of citizenship. It is not fair to strip away the right of parents to pass down their Canadian citizenship to their children.



We know that millions of Canadians work abroad. Some work for Canadian corporations, some teach in schools and universities and others work for the United Nations and humanitarian organizations, such as UNICEF and Doctors Without Borders.

By enacting this legislation, the government would treat citizenship in a manner that reflects and promotes Canadian economic, social, intellectual and humanitarian engagement with the world.

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

\* \* \*

•(1530)

#### WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY ACT

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.)** moved that Bill S-210, An Act respecting World Autism Awareness Day, be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to sponsor the private member's bill, an act respecting World Autism Awareness Day, which was introduced in the Senate by the Hon. Senator Jim Munson.

In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly recognized the second day of April in every year as World Autism Awareness Day. With 1 in every 165 Canadian families now being affected by autism spectrum disorder, I believe now it is imperative and timely that the federal government follow the United Nations and declare April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day in Canada.

I encourage my hon. colleagues in the House to support this very important bill.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

\* \* \*

#### PETITIONS

##### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of some 50 constituents of the riding of Mount Royal who seek to bring to the attention of this House the continued gross violations of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country that has been witness to the world's deadliest conflicts since World War II, where some 5 million people have died in the last 12 years alone in what has been called "Africa's world war".

The petitioners are rightly alarmed by the war crimes and crimes against humanity targeting the innocent, by the massive acts of rape, sexual violence, pillaging, forced labour and summary executions perpetrated on a daily basis and by the repressive measures inflicted by an increasing dictatorial regime.

Accordingly, the petitioners call upon the government to take a leading diplomatic role in implementing international resolutions to put an end to the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to respect existing peace accords, to support the creation of an international criminal tribunal to put an end to the culture of impunity and bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice, and to organize an international conference in Canada on the situation in the Congo.

#### Routine Proceedings

We cannot continue to be indifferent bystanders. Silence is not an option. The massive violations of human rights require immediate action on behalf of Canada and on behalf of the international community.

##### CANADA POST

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present this petition on behalf of my constituents who feel the changes made to their mail service are creating safety concerns for residents.

The petitioners believe their door-to-door mail delivery should be reinstated, as the community mailboxes create more litter and pose a safety concern for residents.

The residents feel they are being treated unfairly and that they were not given adequate notice. Therefore, they are calling on Canada Post to reinstate their door-to-door mail delivery.

##### ENERGY INDUSTRY

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition, in both official languages. The petitioners, numbering well over 200, are from Etobicoke, Scarborough, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Mississauga, Brampton, Pickering, Ajax, Cambridge, Waterloo, Guelph, Windsor, Amherstburg, and Leamington, Ontario; Red Deer, Alberta; and Marysville and Kimberley, B.C.

They draw to the attention of the Canadian government that many countries around the world have energy market monitoring agencies, and that an energy superpower like Canada needs such an agency.

They call upon the Canadian government to recognize the serious impact that high energy prices, including gasoline and fuel prices, are having on the economy. They are citing a lack of competition and transparency in the energy industry. They believe this to be to the detriment of all Canadians.

They wish the Canadian government would acknowledge this and reinstate the office of petroleum price information. They also wish that hearings be conducted. They want to ensure that this serious matter is brought to the attention of Parliament. They also request that the monopolistic efficiency defence abuses provision of the Competition Act be eliminated.

•(1535)

##### PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by 250 Canadians. These petitioners call upon the Canadian government to recognize once and for all the importance and primacy of human life and that life is from the time of conception until natural death.

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

S. O. 52

### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 120 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 120—**Mr. Claude Bachand:**

With respect to the contract for private motor vehicle (PMV) relocation services and the Department of Defence and the Department of Public Works and Government Services: (a) why did the departments terminate the contract with Colley Motorships Ltd.; (b) when do the departments intend to re-tender the contract for PMVs; (c) when do the departments expect to award the PMV contract; (d) in the meantime, do the departments intend to tender a number of contracts containing a single shipment request so as to remain under the \$25,000 limit, in accordance with Government Contracts Regulations and, if so, will this method be used as a temporary solution until the final call for tenders; and (e) how many complaints about Autorail Forwarder did the departments receive during the contract period?

(Return tabled)

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[English]

### MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

### REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SRI LANKA

**The Speaker:** The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth. I will hear the hon. member now.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know hon. members are well aware there is a humanitarian crisis unfolding in Sri Lanka at this very moment. In fact we took note, and more than that, of the crisis in Sri Lanka back in February when the conflict was at its full height. An emergency debate was held at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit to you that we need to have an emergency debate again about the unfolding situation in Sri Lanka, because the way in which the conflict has come to an end, and the current circumstances of over 250,000 people who have been relegated to internally displaced persons camps is grave indeed.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you have been following what has been going on, as have we, and as has the Tamil community here in Canada, which is a very considerable number with tens of thousands of people, many of whom have families in that very region.

As we know, the United Nations Secretary-General attended the area and came back visibly shocked by what he saw, and the humanitarian crisis that was unfolding I know touched him very deeply. In addition, the human rights experts at the United Nations, at the highest level, are indicating that profound problems need to be examined.

The urgency we are facing right now is that literally every day in these camps, people are dying due to the conditions. Canada has failed to take strong diplomatic action to insist that the government of Sri Lanka open these camps to international observation, make sure that aid is fully available, make sure that medical care that is needed by people in order to literally save lives day by day is made available, and open up the camps to international journalists so that the world can know what the truth of the matter is.

I believe that Parliament must debate this issue as a matter of urgency today so that we can raise the issues that I have outlined here and discuss the need for immediate action.

It is not very often in the history of this place that one is faced with a circumstance where as many as a quarter of a million people have been shepherded into camps which are not being run the way internally displaced camps should be run, which is by the United Nations, by the international community. We have a responsibility here as citizens to stand up for and with those who are suffering under these circumstances.

It is a matter of urgency because lives are being lost as we speak.

[Translation]

The Tamil community raised an extraordinary concern. I met with the community's leaders. Members of their own families are in those camps. They are not managed according to international standards and it is our responsibility to protect those who suffer in such cases.

I hope and I expect that you will grant an emergency debate on the current humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka.

Thank you very much for considering this request.

● (1540)

[English]

**The Speaker:** The Chair thanks the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth for his submissions on this point.

[Translation]

I know that we had an emergency debate on this issue a few weeks ago because of the drawn-out conflict between the two armies in Sri Lanka.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I am not satisfied, based on what I have heard at the moment, that the request the hon. member is making meets the exigencies of the Standing Order at this time. Yes, there could be a further humanitarian crisis, I agree. I am not satisfied at the moment that a debate in this House would be helpful on the point in terms of the Standing Order, and therefore, I am not allowing it at this time, but I stress that it is at this time. I am sure the hon. member will make another request later if circumstances change or something becomes more pressing on the issue.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

*[English]*

### NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

The House resumed from May 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Halifax West has 15 minutes left in the time remaining for his remarks.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was speaking to Bill C-20, the nuclear liability and compensation bill, which is a bill that has been in the House before. We studied essentially the same bill in the previous Parliament and now it is back before us.

I was saying yesterday that one of the concerns I have about the situation with this is the role of the minister in reviewing the liability limit every five years. The idea that this needs to be reviewed is valid, but my concern stems from the lack of a coherent nuclear energy policy from the government. It raises the question of how it will deal with the liability issue when it cannot competently manage this file.

We have not seen competent management. If we look at the history of what has occurred over the past year and a half, there was the closure of Chalk River and the decision of the government to try to scapegoat the nuclear regulator and blame Linda Keen for the problems which, as we can see now, clearly were not simply problems with the regulator, but there was a fundamental problem at Chalk River, which I am sure we are going to hear more about in the coming days.

There are concerns, indeed, about the future of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the lack of leadership from the government in that regard. We are all anxious to see the direction in which the government wants to go.

Recently, we have seen media reports where a professor from the University of Calgary actually asked if AECL was about to follow the path of the Avro Arrow and be sold away from Canada, with the loss of many scientists and so forth. The professor detailed the history of neglect for the nuclear sector under the Conservative government over the past three years.

The fact is that internationally over 200 nuclear plants are planned, involving billions of dollars and thousands of jobs. It is an industry in which Canada has been a true leader internationally. We all know the lack of value that this neo-conservative government puts on science. It seems to me at times that it really does not believe in empirical evidence but only in anecdotal evidence. The Conservatives do not believe in science, so to speak.

In fact, one of my colleagues suggested the other day that Barney the Dinosaur should be the official Conservative Party mascot. The Conservatives probably would not like that. They would want him to wear blue instead of purple, I suppose, because purple is too close to red, but I digress.

There is a serious lack of clarity by the Conservatives when it comes to the question of AECL's privatization. They will not tell us if it is on the garage sale list with the CN Tower, for example. The budget documents this year muddied the waters further in their reference to some obscure partnership in stating that the minister is reviewing AECL's structure involving private sector participation in the commercial operations of the corporation. We do not know what that means.

It is distressing to know that since last August there has been on the minister's desk a report from the National Bank done on the future of AECL, which has not been publicly released, even though the government has had since last August to review it. Of course, the minister has had since November, when she was appointed, to review it. It has still not been made public. We still have no idea where the government is going with AECL. One wonders why the government has sat on the report since August. It raises the question of what the government is hiding in this regard.

Is the government going to accept a recommendation to privatize more than 51% of AECL's design service departments, for example, or what is it going to do? Would the minister sell AECL to France or would it go to Canadian interests? What is it going to do? What is the value of AECL during a period of recession?

That is the problem with the government's theory of having a garage sale and selling major government assets worth billions and billions of dollars at a time when their prices obviously are reduced by the recession. We all see how the prices of things are down across the country, perhaps not enough things in some cases for families, but the fact of the matter is for items like government owned buildings and major items like that these days, clearly the dollars one can get for those sales are dramatically reduced. It makes it a terrible and unwise time to unload those kinds of things in a garage sale.

● (1545)

AECL is another example, and there are a lot of questions about AECL's future and no answers.

There is also the issue of the government's lack of support for AECL's bid to build nuclear plants in Ontario. Ontario is going the route of building more nuclear plants. It is making a choice about who the builder is going to be, and AECL is one of the bidders.

Many industry observers see this question of where the government stands as critical to the future success of AECL. They consider the question of whether it wins its bid as critical as well. The government appears to have abandoned AECL on this front.

*Government Orders*

Unlike the Conservative government, Canadians understand the value of a Canadian nuclear industry. A recent survey of attitude toward nuclear power found that 75% of Canadians are “not comfortable with the presence of non-Canadian nuclear plant manufacturers and plant operators in Canada”. The study also found that the contribution to the local economy and the use of Canadian technology were rated most important for nuclear projects by Canadians. We can see why. Imagine how many jobs this involves in Canada, how many scientists and our top minds are engaged in the work of AECL.

As that professor from Calgary noted in a recent media story, when the Diefenbaker government killed the Avro Arrow project in 1959, the result was the demise of a unique Canadian high-tech invention, an innovative process where Canadian minds were very much engaged. It forced thousands of world-class scientists and engineers to leave our country. This is the same kind of issue, where the Conservative government is talking about the possibility of giving AECL away, or not supporting it and allowing it to fail.

Hopefully, we are not about to witness a repeat of the Avro Arrow. With the Conservative government's neglect and incompetence in this sector, Canadians are understandably worried.

It is not surprising that there are serious questions being raised about the future of CANDU reactors and the fate of the thousands of dedicated scientists and engineers who work for AECL and about what the government intends to do about the production and supply of medical isotopes. It is hard to tell. There seems to be no clarity or no plan from the government.

When there was a shutdown of the NRU in Chalk River in December 2006, we would have thought the government would have started then to produce a plan to replace Chalk River, to come up with some other way to produce medical isotopes. There is no apparent evidence of efforts being made by the government to produce a plan and to move forward with solving that problem.

What was the government's answer? It blamed Linda Keen. She was the scapegoat. The government took no responsibility. It is like we see so often in question period. Whatever questions we ask, it seems the government wants to go back more than three years ago when the Liberals were in power and blame the Liberals for everything. The Conservatives do not take any responsibility for the fact that they are now government.

We would think they were still in opposition. They have not really made the transition. They have not adjusted to the fact that they are government. The Conservatives have been in government for three years. It is time to be responsible. It is time to take responsibility for the job they have to do. Their duty to Canadians is to take action and take responsibility on a matter like dealing with medical isotopes, which is so important to Canadians.

There have been at least three radioactive leaks at the Chalk River site in the past few months, and now we have the indefinite shutdown of the laboratory there. The fact that the government still does not have a plan to ensure the security of our isotope supply is shocking. Canadians were exposed to the situation in 2007, so it is no wonder, after all this period of not seeing any action, they do not trust the Conservative government.

The Conservative government's answer in 2007 was not to find a long-term solution to secure the supply of medical isotopes. Instead, it was to fire the nuclear safety regulator for doing her job. It is even more clear now that she was doing her job. And the government did it in the middle of the night, not even in broad daylight, which was amazing.

• (1550)

A few weeks ago, Canadian Medical Association representatives were on the Hill and I spoke with a few of them, including a nuclear medicine doctor from Halifax, Dr. Andrew Ross, who is an outstanding physician and researcher. He told me that the nuclear medical community was very worried at that time about the isotope supply. That was before this shutdown and before the current crisis. He said that one major incident with a closure would create a crisis.

We had a situation already where the reactor in the Netherlands, which is a major producer of isotopes, was shut down over a long period. I gather it is now back up, but Canada was supplying over half of the world's isotope needs and the closure of Chalk River was going to cause a crisis regardless. Therefore, that has been a very big concern for the CMA—

**Mr. Bradley Trost:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to ask about the relevance of my hon. colleague's remarks. This important legislation. He is dealing with all aspects of the nuclear industry and this legislation is about nuclear liability.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I thank the member for his comments and I will give the hon. member for Halifax West some latitude in coming to the point of the bill.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madam Speaker, clearly the bill is about nuclear liability and I am certainly talking about the nuclear industry. I think the points I have been making are very relevant to the debate before the House and it is important we consider these issues.

When we talk about the crisis situation we are in, it is clear the government has no plan whatsoever to deal with it. I guess the Conservatives will look for another scapegoat to blame for their incompetence. We can see why Canadians have a lack of trust in the government and why the opposition has it on probation.

With respect to Bill C-20, while we support the principles of the legislation, it is important that we hear from witnesses in committee on important issues, issues like concerns the industry may have about how this bill will impact the competitiveness of the nuclear industry. It is important to assess the level of support for the bill within industry and whether this is the right liability limit.

I very much look forward to the future study of Bill C-20, with an eye to improving the legislation where it is needed.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I must apologize to my colleague from Halifax West because I did not hear the first part of his speech.

I was unable to determine in his speech if his party, the Liberal Party, and he support an increase in the number of nuclear plants. Bill C-20 will protect nuclear plants in the event of an accident.

Does the Liberal Party agree with promoting nuclear power plants and building more of them?

• (1555)

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madam Speaker, I find my hon. colleague's question quite surprising because he is surely aware that decisions about electricity generation in the provinces fall under provincial jurisdiction. It is a provincial responsibility.

Furthermore, given the fact that the Bloc Québécois members have been talking about protecting provincial powers since the party's inception, I am surprised that the member would even suggest that the federal government should get involved in an area that falls under provincial jurisdiction.

The fact is that the provinces have to make these decisions. For example, the Province of Ontario has decided to build nuclear power plants.

I think that the federal government and Parliament should ensure that the regulations are strong enough to deal with this sector.

[*English*]

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-20 is about limiting liability in the case of a nuclear accident. It is something that needs modernization, but I have a curiosity about one of the points the member raised. The Liberal Party has concerns about whether this is the right amount of liability to apply to the nuclear industry. For Canadians to follow this, a cap is placed on the amount of compensation that can be paid out to individuals or communities in the event of an accident.

He has expressed concerns about whether the limit of \$650 million is the right limit. We have seen a number of nuclear accidents happen over the years. I am not talking about Chernobyl, but relatively small ones have gone through \$1 billion or more in compensation with a start. The Americans have a \$10 billion pool. The Japanese and Europeans have unlimited liability in their nuclear facilities in terms of compensation. Canada is putting in \$650 million in liability.

If the member is concerned about the level of liability that is placed in the bill, is he aware, from all of the advice that we have received, that it cannot be amended at the committee stage? If the Liberal Party votes for the bill at second reading and puts it to committee, it is also endorses and votes for the liability level set out in the bill. He must be comfortable with that liability level. This is something I hope my colleague will be clear about with us today.

If he is comfortable with that, then great. That is his choice and his party's decision. However, he cannot raise concerns about it not being enough money and then say we might fix it later. This cannot be fixed later. It either is this amount or it is not.

I would like a clarification on what my colleague has expressed as a concern so far.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madam Speaker, I trust my hon. colleague for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has read the bill. He makes me wonder whether he has, because if he has, he knows that the current limit is one of only \$75 million. The bill proposes to increase it to \$650 million. That is nearly tenfold. It is a dramatic increase in the liability limit and I am surprised he does not make any acknowledgement of that fact.

If the bill passes second reading and goes to committee, we will have the opportunity at committee to hear witnesses and experts on the question of the liability level. I think he is familiar with the parliamentary process. He knows there are votes at committee. There are votes at report stage and third reading. Then the Senate deals with the bill. There are many opportunities, as the bill goes forward, to make decisions in regard to what makes sense and what does not and whether it makes sense to go forward or ask the government to start over again.

My impression is that the bill is a good level. However, I am certainly interested to hear what witnesses have to say at committee.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have a quick question for the member for Halifax West.

[*English*]

He is our critic for natural resources and he does a good job. I know he spoke about competitiveness, so I want to hear his comment on how he regards the limited liability affecting competitiveness. We see the job that the AECL does and the fact that we have been reliant on only one facility. I would not have a problem with it being competitive.

How would the limited liability affect competitiveness? In the end, if we have third parties opening up these nuclear sites, the government would probably be responsible for liability. Would it affect competitiveness? Would it be more open or would it be restrictive?

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Madam Speaker, this is related to the question of competitiveness. If we set a limit so high that an operator of a nuclear facility is unable to obtain insurance, then it is unable to operate. We are certainly not going to see the kinds of new nuclear plants that the Government of Ontario wishes to build, for instance. I think even the Government of Saskatchewan has indicated an interest.

Even NDP governments in some places these days have expressed an interest in having nuclear plants. They have made the decision, in their own judgment, that the concern about climate change is at the top of the environmental agenda these days and that is the major problem we face in the world environmentally. Relative to other kinds of sources of energy, they have decided they prefer nuclear energy.

*Government Orders*

However, if we are to have nuclear production in our country, it is important we ensure that AECL or other operators can exist, operate them and manage to have the insurance they require. A moment ago, we heard about the U.S. system, which is a very different one. When the U.S. has a much larger industry, much larger companies and many more reactors than we have in Canada, it can manage to have a different kind of system.

It seems to me that the system proposed here, with a vast increase in the limit, is one that suits Canada better. However, as I said, I look forward to hearing witnesses before the committee.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I hear that the member is concerned that the Americans are looking to perhaps purchase the atomic energy plant at Chalk River, the nuclear plant. They are certainly interested in purchasing significant sections of Canada's nuclear industry, but under the existing liability act, because \$75 million is way below the international standards, they are held liable, using the American standard, to \$10 billion.

If the bill were to pass with only \$650 million as the liability, it would enable these American companies to pick up sections of the Canadian nuclear industry because they then would not have to face the \$10 billion liability possibility.

How does passing the bill keep and secure our nuclear industry? Would it not say to the American industry, "Come on in and—"

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order. I will have to give the hon. member a few seconds to respond, so 35 seconds for a response.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** That is very short, Madam Speaker. The member indicated that I had said something about being concerned about Americans buying these plants. I do not remember saying the word "Americans" at all during my speech or making any reference to them. I am concerned about the fact that the government is looking at selling assets, whether it be its buildings, whether it be AECL and others, at fire sale prices. In this situation, we should be very concerned about that. However, in terms of the comparison between the U.S. system and ours, again, the U.S. system is very different and we should hear witnesses about ours.

•(1605)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-20, because the Bloc Québécois believes that this legislation is absolutely necessary. The previous maximum compensation of \$75 million in the event of an incident had been established quite some time ago, in 1976, and needed to be increased.

But before I go any further, I would like to respond to the member for Halifax West, who said earlier that he did not understand my question, because he thought I did not know who had jurisdiction over nuclear power plant construction. That was not my question. What I was asking was whether the Liberal Party wanted to develop the nuclear industry. When you invest \$800 million in nuclear research and development, you are promoting it. The federal government is not saying it is going to build nuclear facilities, but it is promoting them.

Once again, the Liberals have no clear policy, and the member could not give a clear answer to my question, which is why he changed the subject. It is always the same thing with the Liberals at present: they do not know where they are going.

I will come back to the initial topic. Bill C-20 seeks to establish a liability regime applicable in the event of a nuclear incident. The bill clearly says "in the event of a nuclear incident". It makes operators of nuclear installations absolutely and exclusively liable for damages up to a maximum of \$650 million. It is hard to imagine that the company that owns a nuclear facility will be solely liable. In fact, even a minor nuclear incident will cost more than \$650 million. Damages will easily run to billions of dollars. Who will pay for that? The provinces and the federal government.

Bill C-20 is a reincarnation of Bill C-5. We had studied that bill in committee and had had the opportunity to ask insurance companies whether they were ready for such legislation. Naturally, insurance companies are generally rather cautious, and they were not necessarily willing to pay much more than \$650 million. They might have gone as far as \$1 billion if we had forced them, but I had and still have the feeling that they cannot go any farther.

So we cannot compare the Canadian system to the American system as some people do, since we do not have many plants. American plants pool their money. It is not a \$10 billion pool, but it varies from \$9 billion to \$11 billion. This pool also varies based on those giving guarantees. We agree that this would certainly be much closer to what a nuclear accident would cost.

The Bloc Québécois believes that this would still be an improvement over the previous legislation that provided for only \$75 million in compensation, even though it is proving to be difficult to obtain insurance above the amount set out in Bill C-20. However, we realize that governments will be required to pay out the rest of the amount.

We are very concerned about a nuclear accident. There are several incidents each year at every nuclear plant. We call them incidents because they are contained. One of the most dangerous activities is changing the bundles of uranium-235 and uranium-239. They are changed by robots when all of their energy has been used up. When they are moved, there can be radiation in the room, and also outside the room where the reactors are located.

There is always some danger. We are well aware of that.

•(1610)

Last year, between November 5 and November 9, such an incident took place at Gentilly-2 in Quebec. I am not mentioning this just because it is Gentilly, since these kinds of accidents happen all over the place, for example in Burlington.

We are well aware that there can be problems with aging plants. The CANDU system is not internationally recognized as a safe system. It was possible to sell it abroad, but that was more under the Liberals, because it was practically a gift. The reactors were delivered and no payments were ever requested. So it was not because of the quality of the CANDU.

*Government Orders*

Earlier, the hon. member for Halifax West said that the government was not taking responsibility regarding the production of isotopes. That is true, and he is correct in saying so. Last year, we were forced to pass special legislation to get the plant running again, without any assurance that it would last. It was 55 years old last year, and this year it is 56. It is clear that this plant is past its prime.

However, the MAPLE, which was developed with taxpayer money over 15 years, is still not functional. We have even stopped hearing that this project would be completed. One of the reasons was that the engineers who might have done so have left, because the work was not moving along quickly enough and they could not see an end to the project. All of the top minds left the country under the Liberals and moved elsewhere. Our nuclear scientists and engineers are no longer here. That is one reason why the MAPLE was stalled, and why the government decided to scrap it after spending billions of dollars on its development.

Quebeckers have a hard time with this, since they contribute by paying taxes. Only 6% of all of Canada's nuclear energy is produced in Quebec, while Quebeckers pay 23% of all nuclear research and nuclear-plant promotion. Furthermore, this energy is not necessary. It can make people rich, but it is not necessary. We prefer green energies. In Quebec, we focus particularly on hydroelectricity.

All of Canada could also develop power plants run by deep geothermal energy, a sector that is completely ignored in this country, even though 24 countries have developed it. By drilling two to five kilometres underground, we can extract heat to generate decentralized electricity. This would be much better than a Canadian network that Quebec would not go along with, since it interferes with our jurisdictions. We will never accept it.

So, we are in favour of Bill C-20 in principle. As I said earlier, it is certainly not enough, but it must be said that nuclear power costs the government a lot of money. Even if the companies pay for the insurance, the government still establishes systems so that, for example, field hospitals can be set up quickly. The RCMP spends a lot of money to make checks and prevent terrorist attacks from taking place at nuclear plants. Security of nuclear plants costs the government money, and this money comes from taxpayers. So this is not a necessary energy source, nor is it a green one, that we could support.

•(1615)

Furthermore, the issue of nuclear waste has never been settled. This is a matter of great importance. To date, nuclear plants in Canada have produced over 2 million irradiated fuel bundles and they do not know what to do with them. That number will double if our existing reactors operate until the end of their predicted life spans.

So we are talking about 4 million bundles that need to be put somewhere. At the moment, consultations are under way all across Canada to find out where to put these things for the next 1,000 years. There has been research to see if this uranium might not be used to produce a depleted but still usable uranium. They came to realize, after fortunes were spent on it in France and after the Americans bought the rights to carry out this research, which incidentally they too gave up on about a year or a year and half ago, that there is no future to reusing uranium in this way.

So a place has to be found to put the bundles. They can be reused—this is possible—to make nuclear weapons. We know just how dangerous that is.

As long as nowhere is found for storage, stable storage if possible, of these bundles, we will not be able to develop nuclear energy and we will not be able to keep on thinking that it is a green energy and not a hazard to human health. It is a hazard to health because nuclear waste is a hazardous substance. What is more, the mining of uranium is dangerous as well.

I have consulted experts, and pure uranium could be used in nuclear facilities. I know that the present government wants to promote its use for extracting the oil from oil sands. Heat is needed to produce electricity and to extract as much oil as possible from oil sands. Then those nuclear plants will have to have a location for secure storage of their waste.

It is not just a matter of individuals deciding to accept or not to accept nuclear waste being stored in some location, but there is a whole context, a whole province, a whole part of a country, that has to agree to it. When this hazardous waste is being transported by truck or train, accidents or thefts can occur, as well as terrorism or sabotage, and they can occur just about anywhere. So it is not the responsibility of a small community, but the responsibility of a very large area.

In terms of such incidents, Bill C-20 does include some sensible provisions. We all hope that nothing will ever happen, but Bill C-20 is the very least the government can do. However, we are concerned that increasing insurance will cause a change of course resulting in the promotion of nuclear energy and CANDU reactors, which are not very safe as far as thermal and nuclear plants go, not to mention completely unnecessary.

As I said earlier, we can produce electricity using green energy. I went on at length about geothermal energy because, according to a study done in the United States, it can meet the needs of the entire United States and render coal-fired and nuclear plants obsolete. By 2050, geothermal energy alone can meet Americans' energy needs. There will be nine billion people on the planet in 2050.

•(1620)

We will need a lot of energy. Nuclear energy will not be able to supply that demand, and the prospect of plants melting down will always be a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads. Bill C-20 would never have been drafted if nuclear power were not dangerous. We are stuck in a vicious circle. We have this bill because nuclear energy is dangerous, but if we were not doing dangerous things, we would not need bills like Bill C-20 to protect people in case of an incident. Once again, I agree that \$650 million is not going to protect us.

*Government Orders*

Suppose an incident were to occur at Chalk River. The fallout would go beyond Chalk River to Ottawa and Quebec. So \$650 million would not be nearly enough to compensate people, rebuild houses, and clean up and decontaminate areas. It would certainly cost much more than that.

So the government must think instead of investing more, and that is what we are calling on the government to do. We want the government to put money towards developing green energies, instead of investing in research limited almost exclusively to nuclear plants and the sequestration of the CO<sub>2</sub> gases produced by the oil sands. As I mentioned earlier, there is geothermal energy, but also solar energy. We know that great strides have been made in terms of generating electricity with solar energy. Spain has some examples of it working very well. We know that wind energy is already going well. So the government could spend more money and do more to develop the hydroelectricity we are capable of generating.

There is also biomass energy. Right now, we do not know what to do with our forestry workers. Biomass energy was used especially for heating, but it can also be used to generate electricity. Digesters can also be used on farms. Instead of letting animal excrement create methane and make greenhouse gases even worse, we could use digesters. The government should help farmers create electricity with these systems. They are on the market. It is just a matter of cost-effectiveness.

If we looked at the overall cost of nuclear energy per kilowatt-hour, we obviously would not even think about developing it. If we look at just the cost of production and not how much it will cost to dismantle the plants that will still be there even when they are not in use, even 40 years after they have stopped producing. Those areas will be radioactive. We will have a hard time closing those plants.

In any case, the cost of insurance will be included in the price per kilowatt-hour. That is what I wanted to mention as well. Even if we had requested much higher insurance, ultimately, the customer would always be the one to pay, because the price per kilowatt-hour would increase.

So I agree with a bill like Bill C-20. It is a minimum, but at least we are in favour of that minimum. However, we need to invest in green energies, and we need to do it now. The price per kilowatt-hour will be much lower and the risk of danger greatly reduced since it will be much easier to provide security. A wind turbine or a geothermal power plant is not at risk of being blown up. No terrorists are interested in doing that. But someone could be interested in blowing up a nuclear power plant if there was ever a conflict somewhere.

So, a green energy that is not dangerous is not the same thing as a green energy that is dangerous. Bill C-20 has to do with the health of the people and how to respond to a potential accident. That is the minimum.

• (1625)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, after listening to members of the Bloc, I do not sense that they are overly supportive of the nuclear industry or the development of more nuclear plants in the country. I, therefore,

would question why they would be interested in supporting the bill when the responsible position to take would be to vote against it.

In Manitoba, we have a lot of hydroelectric power but we have only developed half of our potential. If we were to develop the rest of our potential and be able to transport it to the east-west power grid across the country, we could potentially close down all the coal-fired plants in Ontario. Instead, what we have developing here is nuclear plants being considered in Ontario and, evidently, in Saskatchewan and Alberta, which is clearly the wrong way to go for all the reasons that the member just illustrated, such as the storage of the material which is very expensive and has a risk for many years.

Huge deposits of nuclear material have been put in the oceans by the Russians and other powers over the years and we may never know what the long-term effects of that will be. It, obviously, cannot be good because over time those barrels will rust and the materials will be leaked into the oceans. I do not think we want to be promoting more of something that has not worked very well in the past.

I would ask the member to reconsider where he is going with this because I kind of like what he had to say and he was on the right track in his speech, but he has not really explained to me why he supports the bill.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for this question, which allows me to make some clarifications.

We are fundamentally in favour of safety. We are fundamentally in favour of companies having a minimum liability in case of an accident. The companies already exist. There are 18 nuclear facilities in Canada, so the danger does exist. However, we do not want to create any more facilities. We hope to see an end to the production of nuclear energy. However, we cannot close the facilities that already exist. There is no way we will be able to stop them as long as they seem to have some usefulness.

We want to provide people with a little protection. If an accident happens near Hamilton, \$650 million will not make any difference. However, the company will have a minimum liability. It is in that sense that we are saying yes to this bill and no to nuclear energy development.

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech. I know he is a great environmentalist and green advocate.

The purpose of this bill is to make businesses more responsible. However, a few years ago, the government made some changes to legislation that allow private companies to manage nuclear facilities. One might wonder why private companies are being given such responsibilities and allowed to manage industries that involve a great deal of risk and potential harm. By their very nature, these companies have very limited liability. In the event of a problem, they can simply close up shop and disappear. The problems would then fall to the community and the government.



*Government Orders*

I wonder if my colleague believes that this is enough, or if we should not monitor this industry and the remaining facilities. Unfortunately, when private companies' resources run out, they simply disappear. Does my colleague believe that the compensation that private companies are being asked to provide will be sufficient in the event of a problem?

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the excellent question posed by my colleague from Sherbrooke.

No, that amount is not sufficient. We realize that. We are simply saying that the amount is better than the \$75 million proposed earlier. The fact that some plants have been privatized is certainly a huge problem.

However, we must not forget, and I would like to remind my colleague from Sherbrooke, that in Canada we have an organization called the AECL. This commission inspects nuclear power plants and issues operating permits. It is a group of independent and very competent persons. They are so independent that, last year, the Minister of Natural Resources fired the president because she was not telling him what he wanted to hear. This group was independent. It may be less so now. I do not know. However, I think it is absolutely necessary. It is an integral part of the cost of producing nuclear power. We must have organizations that conduct inspections and ensure that the plants are in good working order. Just imagine if the 18 plants we have now grew to 50. That would result in huge expenses just for inspections.

For that reason I believe that this energy is not viable. It is not a green energy and we are diverting inordinate amounts of money that never produce even one kilowatt hour.

•(1630)

[*English*]

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am really interested in this debate as I know are most of my constituents in Hamilton Mountain.

It seems to me that what this issue is about is protecting Canadians in the case of a nuclear accident and tragedy. I wonder if the member could speak a bit about where the number \$650 million of liability comes from. Why does he believe that number is adequate? I think all of the evidence from the experts speaks to the contrary.

We know, for example, that when the Pembina Institute did a study on what the cost would be of a potential major accident at the Darlington nuclear plant, which is not all that far away from my riding of Hamilton Mountain, it estimated the cost to be \$1 trillion. Bill C-20 does not even provide for liability of \$1 billion. We are talking about \$650 million. The reality is, as the member will know, that taxpayers will be on the hook for the difference, and that difference is far from insignificant.

We are talking in the House about the deplorable state of the deficit now, which is 50% higher today than it was estimated to be just four months ago, but those numbers pale in comparison when we are talking about a potential \$1 trillion liability as a result of just one nuclear accident.

I wonder if the member could just explain to the House why he believes that \$650 million is adequate.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet:** Madam Speaker, I never said that \$650 million was enough. On the contrary, it will never be enough. However, it is one way of ensuring that the private businesses that own the plants take at least some responsibility.

It is always the citizens who pay. It might be said that governments pay on behalf of citizens, but it is always the citizens who end up paying. Had we required \$10 billion in insurance, the premiums would have been so high that they would have been included in the price of the kilowatt hour and people would have paid in any event. The companies do not contribute. It must be understood that they never contribute. The cost is covered by the price of the kilowatt hour or, if there were an accident, after the fact. We will pay one way or another for an energy source that is not safe, that is dangerous and that could cause accidents.

[*English*]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am speaking against Bill C-20, the nuclear liability and compensation bill.

We do need a new nuclear liability and compensation act, and we have needed it for at least 20 years. As a liability limit, \$650 million is nowhere near enough. The Auditor General has said that we need a new act as have various organizations. However, to set the limit at \$650 million is nowhere near enough.

The United States has a compensation—

•(1635)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member.

At this point I must, pursuant to Standing Order 38, inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for St. Paul's, Health; the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Arts and Culture.

The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina may resume.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, as I was saying, the United States has a compensation limit of \$10 billion. If we look at other countries that have had quite a few nuclear accidents, whether it be Germany or Japan, we will notice that they do not have an upper limit at all, that if there is an accident, the company must pay all the costs of cleaning it up.

This bill used to be called Bill C-63, then it was called Bill C-5 in the last Parliament, and now it is Bill C-20 and the number remains the same. New Democrats said back then that we do not support \$650 million as the existing compensation limit because it is way too low. We said it then. We say it now. Why are we seeing this number again?

I believe one of the reasons we are seeing this bill reintroduced today is because American nuclear companies are really interested in purchasing significant sections of Canada's nuclear industry.

*Government Orders*

Under the current legislation, they would be subjected to the American rules as Canadian law does not meet the international baseline. We know the international minimum, according to the two international agreements, the Paris and Vienna conventions, requires a bare minimum of \$600 million. Because of that, under American law, the parent company of a subsidiary can be sued for compensation due to the actions of, say, a Canadian subsidiary of an American company if the law governing that subsidiary is below the international standards, as it is now. If this bill were passed, then the American corporations could pick up any number of nuclear companies.

What concerns me most is what is happening at Chalk River. We have a reactor shutdown. We have at least 30,000 patients per week who need the precious medical isotopes the reactor produces and we know that these isotopes will run out in a week. We also know that the reactor has had a heavy water spill and we also know that it will be shut down at least until mid-June, and maybe even longer.

Now, people who have cancer or who need heart scans cannot get the scans done. People who have thyroid cancer, as I have had, after the thyroid has been removed, need to ingest a medical iodine isotope, pill I-131, which I remember taking. It would then destroy the cancer cells in the thyroid area as the thyroid attracts these nuclear iodines made by the isotopes. If people do not get it treated, if they do not take that iodine pill, which is called a seed, then the thyroid cancer cells could spread.

I am glad that when I was diagnosed with that cancer, I was able to have it removed and then, at that time, able to have access to this iodine I-131 pill. I cannot imagine what will happen to these thyroid cancer patients who need this treatment, and then to have them hear that we are going to be running out of these isotopes in a week. What is going to happen to them?

Instead of focusing on a plan B, instead of looking at whether to build a new reactor that is supposed to be on line, we are discussing this bill that certainly does not really make sense because the liability of \$10 billion is 1,540% higher than the limit proposed by this bill.

• (1640)

Is it because our reactor is that much safer than what the Americans have? Is it because Canadian taxpayers have far more money, that if there were a big accident, certainly the Canadian government could do the cleanup? I just heard that we have at least a \$50 billion deficit. Where are we going to find the money to do the cleanup if the company is not liable?

Is the imminent sale of AECL to an American company that has the government so eager to make the Canadian nuclear legislation more American-friendly? That perhaps is one of the reasons. We are quite concerned because right now in tough economic times, the value is the lowest, which means that AECL can easily be picked up if there are interested buyers once this bill has passed.

We believe that this is bad legislation. We do not think that it can be amended, especially the dollar amount of \$650 million, through the committee. I have already heard that such an amendment would be ruled out of order when it is referred to committee, which means that we are stuck with this dollar amount of \$650 million. In the speeches I have heard today, whether from the Liberals or the Bloc,

there is concern that \$650 million is too low. This bill cannot be passed at second reading because it is just not good enough.

If we think of forecasting costs of possible accidents, a major accident at the Ontario Darlington nuclear plant, God forbid, east of Toronto, which is not far from where I am, could cause damages estimated in the range of \$1 trillion, not \$1 billion but \$1 trillion. No wonder the Japanese and the Germans do not have an upper limit.

There are statistics of the costs of past accidents. On October 5, 1966, the Enrico Power Plant, Unit 1, outside Detroit, Michigan, not far from our border, suffered a minor issue in its reactor. The public and the environment did not experience any tragedy. The minor repairs of the entire accident, which were not entirely fixed until 1970, were \$132 million in 1970 dollars. This amount would be covered, but that was a 1970s figure and it was for minor damage.

If we look at Three Mile Island, which I think everyone is familiar with, in 1979 in Harrisburg, again there was a minor nuclear incident. It caused one to two cases of cancer per year and the cleanup and investigation of the incident cost an estimated \$975 million U.S. That is over the Canadian limit already and again we are talking about seventies and eighties dollars.

It is troubling that we have such a low limit of \$650 million. We know that nuclear energy is extremely unsafe if it is exposed. I remember when I had to take a radioactive iodine pill, I was in a secure room. No one could come anywhere near me for at least three days. The food was put in through a secure passageway. It was extremely radioactive. No one would want to sit beside me when I was taking that pill.

If we look at the world's foremost expert on nuclear liability, Norbert Pelzer, he is saying that the upper limit should be unlimited and that even the \$10 billion in the United States is insufficient to cover a huge nuclear incident. Our amount is not even enough for a minor issue, never mind a major problem.

• (1645)

The other part of the bill that is problematic is the compensation process is cumbersome. It should be like an insurance claim. Instead, right now victims of nuclear accidents have to go through court. Going through the legal system is extremely costly and not everyone has access to it.

The other problem is the bill does not cover any accidents outside the plant setting. For example, if oil and mining companies use radioactive materials and a mistake is made, such as a spill or something takes place, this insurance would not cover that at all and the victims would be left high and dry.

*Government Orders*

When we calculate the cost of cleaning up Three Mile Island, if that dollar amount did not come from the nuclear industry itself but directly from taxpayers, we could have built 1.15 million hundred watt solar panels. We should think of the possibility of the green jobs we would be missing if the taxpayers have to pick up the tab if there are any accidents. We certainly need to have more green jobs.

Canada ranked 11th in last year's poll, measuring wind power and in the last budget, the government cut off the grants for wind energy, which will make it even worse. The bill is really not helpful.

I want to point out various accidents. For example, East Germany had an accident in 1975. On May 4, 1986, again in Germany, there was fuel damage. What happened was attempts by an operator to dislodge a fuel pebble damaged its cladding, releasing radiation, detectable up to two kilometres from the reactor.

In June 1999 Japan had a control rod malfunction. The operators, attempting to insert one control rod during an inspection, neglected the procedure and instead withdrew three, causing a 15 minute uncontrolled sustained reaction at the number one reactor of the Shika Nuclear Power Plant. The electric company that owned the reactor did not report this incident and falsified records, covering it up until March, 2007.

Also in September 1999, a few months later in Japan, workers did something wrong, which exceeded the critical mass, and, as a result, three workers were exposed to radiation doses in excess of allowable limits. Two of these workers died and 116 other workers received lesser doses, but still have a great many problems. In March 2006 Tennessee had a big problem.

These countries that have had problems have set either no upper limit or a limit in the billions. In Canada setting the limit at \$650 million is really not at all useful. That is why the New Democrats will not support the bill.

• (1650)

We would hope the government would take it back, consider the upper limit, either make it similar to the U.S. or, even better, do not set an upper limit. That would be a new nuclear liability and compensation act, which is overdue, and it would certainly get the support of New Democrats.

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened to my hon. friend's remarks.

First, does she realize that the compensation as set out in the bill is for victims and not to repair everything that may possibly happen in a nuclear accident?

Second, does she not realize that it is not only commercial nuclear reactors with which we have to be concerned? There are smaller accidents as well.

Saskatoon, for example, has a nuclear reactor, which is experimental and is used for research. We have to be concerned about those, and there are many others across the country.

Third, does the hon. member realizes that if we do not pass the bill, the limits will remain lower than they are? I can understand the hon. member wanting the limits to be higher, but if the legislation is

defeated, the limits would stay low instead of rise to give more compensation.

Could the hon. member comment on those three points?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, of course \$75 million is nowhere near to being adequate. Neither is \$650 million. Right now if American companies purchase a Canadian company, then the \$10 billion U.S. figure kicks in, not the \$75 million.

Yes, I know there are 30,000 men and women working in 150 companies in Canada. I also know AECL, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., is a publicly owned entity, and I am glad it is. We should not privatize it. What I am concerned about is the bill would open the door for privatization of AECL and/or other industries that could be picked up by the Americans.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to note that we have a list of nuclear accidents, totalling some 81 over the years. These have caused untold damage to the surroundings.

We have no such record when it comes to hydro development. I do not think we can find any serious accidents in hydro development in Quebec, Manitoba or anywhere else in the country that have caused deaths and the disruption that nuclear accidents cause.

Wind development is catching on big time around the world and it is being developed in Canada. There are no serious ramifications similar to what we have determined with nuclear accidents.

In terms of the liability issue, are we making an assumption that Canadian reactors are going to be built out in the middle of nowhere? Whether a plant is developed in Japan, Germany or in the United States near an urban area or in Canada, why would we have a \$650 million liability in Canada, \$10 billion in the United States and unlimited in Japan and Germany? It makes no sense.

The bottom line is the taxpayers are going to end up footing the bill for this at the end of the day. If the accident is big enough, the company will declare bankruptcy and turn the whole mess over to the taxpayer. That is what we will end up with.

Clearly we should not be developing any further nuclear plants. We should keep the ones we have going as best we can and raise the limits for them. However, we should not develop new ones when we have such good opportunities to get into wind and hydro development.

We were told years ago that DDT was safe, then we banned it. We were told that asbestos was safe, then we banned it. Now we know that nuclear power is not really very safe. Why do we continue to ignore these warnings and want to develop more?

I was very disappointed when I heard from the member from Saskatchewan say that his government was considering new nuclear plants. There will be an election in Saskatchewan in a couple of years and I think we would like to fight an election on that issue, and see how it resolves itself. Therefore, I do not think the Saskatchewan government should go ahead and build many plants because it will get them half built and then they will be shut down.

*Government Orders*

There are many other areas we should be looking at, and I think the member is on the right track when she talks about wind development and hydro electric development. We should be proceeding with that and not developing more nuclear power.

● (1655)

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, in this economic downturn, green jobs are the way to go.

We need an alternative energy plan for renewable energy whether it is solar or wind. That is the way to go. We should be investing in the technologies for batteries and panels, for example, so we can harness solar energy and put panels on as many building as possible.

We have a huge country with a great land mass, so we could be the superpower of wind energy. We could even manufacture those wind blades or different types of wind turbines in Canada. That would produce jobs and energy. It is certainly a win-win situation. We would burn less and we would pay less.

However, there are existing nuclear plants. Some of them have to be fixed and some have to be rebuilt. Privatizing the existing ones or having a fire sale is not going to do the job. At the end of the day, taxpayers will be paying for it. Inevitably and unfortunately there could either be human error or the plants may be too old, they might leak and there would be consequences.

Nuclear waste or spillage is extremely dangerous and harmful to people, plant life and the environment. It is very costly to clean up. Nuclear waste stays forever, so it has to be contained. Once it has leaked out, it is very difficult to clean up. That area is going to be very costly, and \$650 million for liability is just not enough.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on the member's comments. Would she agree that an amendment could be introduced, if this bill were to pass second reading and go to committee, to increase the liability to an unlimited amount, which is the case in Germany and Japan? Even though we do not particularly like the bill and do not like further nuclear development, at least we would get some sort of structure in force that would be consistent with the highest standard, that being Germany and Japan, as opposed to some low standard here of \$650 million, which hardly seems adequate given the situation in the world right now?

Does the member think that will have any real negative effect in the sense the companies may or may not be able to get liability insurance in an insurance market that keeps going up and down in a very inconsistent way?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Madam Speaker, the New Democrats will support any bill that would increase the liability limits to \$10 billion or that would have unlimited liability, just like in Japan and Germany. We would give it very speedy passage. It is long overdue. The existing Nuclear Liability Act does not work because the limit is so low. We need it renewed because it has not been changed since the mid-1970s. However, this is not the way to go.

Once it passes second reading, it cannot be amended at the committee because it is a substantial change. The government should either withdraw the bill and bring in a new bill with different limits or there should be an amendment to change the numbers.

● (1700)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague for Hamilton Mountain.

I rise with deep regret to speak to Bill C-20, the nuclear liability and compensation act, because I believe all members of good conscience should oppose this bill. It leaves Canadians and our communities woefully under-compensated in the event of a nuclear accident.

Communities, like Kincardine near the Bruce nuclear facility; Whitby, Oshawa and Toronto adjacent to Darlington; Bécancour near Gently in Quebec; and Point Lepreau in New Brunswick, are all in jeopardy if a major accident were to occur. We know that a major accident at the Darlington nuclear plant would cause damages in the range of \$1 trillion. Clearly, \$650 million or even \$10 billion are insufficient in terms of liability coverage.

Interestingly enough, there are no nuclear facilities in British Columbia. Madam Speaker, I am sure you are well aware of that and perhaps a little bit grateful. This could be because of the mess at Hanford in Washington state. It has cost taxpayers billions because of the expensive remediation that has been going on there for years with no end in sight. Today, Hanford is the most contaminated nuclear site in the United States and the focus of the largest environmental cleanup in U.S. history. It is hugely expensive. It is certainly more than \$650 million. It is in the range of several billion dollars or perhaps a trillion dollars.

Hence, we have the \$10 billion liability demanded in the United States, which is far less than the unlimited liability required in Japan and China, because, quite simply, the cost to a community and the people who live there is without limit in the case of a nuclear accident.

As we all know, this bill is being reintroduced by the government despite its many deficiencies. In the last Parliament, New Democrats were the only opponents to this bill, and with good reason. No private insurer will cover an individual for compensation from damage caused by a nuclear accident.

While Bill C-20 updates legislation from the 1970s, as has been pointed out, it only increases compensation levels to the absolute minimum international standard. The existing compensation limit of \$75 million and the new limit of \$650 million is simply not acceptable. What on earth is the government doing? Why is it so prepared to ignore the reality of this situation?

*Government Orders*

American nuclear companies are interested in purchasing significant sections of Canada's nuclear industry. Under the current legislation, they would be subjected to American rules because Canadian laws do not even meet the international base line. Under American law, the parent company of the subsidiary can be sued for compensation due to the actions of its foreign subsidiary if the law governing that subsidiary is below international standards.

These American corporations are reluctant to invest in the Canadian industry, that is until Bill C-20 is passed. Sadly, the government does not seem to understand the irresponsible nature of this legislation. However, the nuclear industry has the attention of the Canadian public and this issue has strong political resonance with all Canadians. They are, quite simply, concerned about nuclear safety.

The NDP is the only party that is taking the health of Canadians seriously, so seriously that we have been asking the difficult questions, such as why is the liability limit \$10 billion in the United States and only the proposed \$650 million in Canada? There is no reason for that. It is not rational. The American limit is a whopping 1,540% higher than the limit that is proposed by this bill.

• (1705)

I have another question. Is the imminent sale of AECL to an American company making the government eager to make Canadian nuclear legislation more American-friendly?

Those are important questions but so far we have heard no acceptable answers.

It is more than clear that only New Democrats are serious about protecting the interests of ordinary Canadians while the government takes a cavalier attitude toward nuclear safety.

The Conservatives certainly seem to be laying the groundwork to sell AECL during tough economic times when the value is so very low. We, as Canadians, need to be profoundly concerned about the possibility of the privatization of nuclear facilities. These facilities must be properly managed, and there is no question about that, and that is in the public interest. I, for one, would feel far more comfortable if they remained in public hands. I do not see much evidence that the government has the public interest at the centre of its many questionable policies.

Quite simply, the Conservatives are failing to protect Canadians in the event of a nuclear spill. This level of compensation, the \$650 million, would mean only a handful of dollars for the loss of a home, a business or the loss of a life. It is far below that which is required by the international community. For Canadians, and particularly those who live near nuclear power plants or other nuclear installations, this is unacceptable. Their government has sold them out to vested interests.

New Democrats will not be supporting this limited level of liability, nor will we be supporting the bill. It does not even begin to touch on the real cost of a nuclear accident, and that is a betrayal. It is a betrayal of Canadians and of our communities. It is simply not the kind of behaviour that I believe many Canadians expect of our government and should demand of their government.

This is nothing less than a corporate subsidy to the nuclear industry to make it possible for it to move in, take over and privatize the industry that Canadians built. We on this side of the House simply will not bow to that kind of corporate subsidy. We will not allow the government to get away with that without a great deal of discussion and raising our voices on this side of the House.

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would ask my colleague to maybe expand on the notion of what would happen in a community. I think we can all imagine. Those of us who are of a certain age can certainly recall Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and other accidents that have happened. The devastation and damage is immediate from the explosions.

My colleague talked about further implications for communities and I would ask her to maybe expand on that. What sort of things are we talking about in a community, not just the hours after a disaster but in the days and weeks after and the ability of citizens to survive and continue their life as they know it in their own homes and in their own neighbourhoods?

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Madam Speaker, it is very difficult for Canadians to imagine. We have seen accidents in other parts of the world and so far we have been spared those horrific events.

We know there are leaks and we know there have been leaks at AECL into the Ottawa River. We know there have been leaks at the Bruce Nuclear Power Plant into many centres that take their drinking water from Lake Huron. However, we have not seen the kind of devastation that was suffered at Three Mile Island or Chernobyl.

In terms of Chernobyl, generations have been affected by the fallout from that accident. The people who provided emergency assistance when Chernobyl exploded are long dead and gone. Their lives were shortened. They were afflicted with miserable radiation sickness and, even worse, cancers and death as a result of the fallout.

I cannot imagine what could possibly happen in densely populated areas like Toronto, Oshawa, Whitby or Pickering if we experienced a nuclear accident. If Darlington were to fail in some catastrophic way, we simply would not have the facilities to manage. Hundreds of thousands of people would need immediate help and our hospitals would be overwhelmed. The reality is that our systems are overburdened because federal and provincial governments have not seen fit to keep up with the needs of the medical community and hospitals. Hospitals and emergency services would be overwhelmed. Homes would be lost.

We know that in other kinds of disasters, such as floods, fires and hurricanes, the loss of homes is catastrophic to the people who live in those communities. Imagine hundreds of square miles where homes become uninhabitable, schools can no longer be utilized and there simply are not the kinds of services to support a huge population. While it may seem extreme, this is what we need to be prepared for.

*Government Orders*

Nobody who lived in Chernobyl believed that the nuclear plant would blow sky high until that catastrophic event, which left a community bereft, created illness and destroyed the future of not just the first generation but the second, third and fourth generations. We have no idea how many generations will suffer as a result of that accident.

We need to be prepared and \$650 million does not do it and \$10 billion does not do it. It is something we need to be cognizant of. We cannot allow taxpayers, the people of this nation, to be put on the hook to allow private sector nuclear facilities to pop up in order for the nuclear industry to prosper exponentially in terms of profits. We need to stand firm.

• (1710)

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and join my NDP colleagues in speaking against Bill C-20, the nuclear liability and compensation act. In fact, we are the only party in this House that refuses to give the government a blank cheque on this inadequate reform to the limits of nuclear liability.

Simply put, I oppose this bill because it does not keep pace with the rest of the world's measures to provide safe use of nuclear energy. Nonetheless, there is no doubt about the need for modernizing the act. The liability limits were initially set in the early 1970s by the Liberals, but the limits were inadequate even then and certainly by today's standards are even worse.

To its credit, this bill does propose to increase the maximum liability for operators of nuclear installations for damage resulting from a nuclear accident from \$75 million to \$650 million per nuclear installation, but this limit remains shamefully low when we consider the consequences of a nuclear accident.

This bill seems designed to protect corporations rather than citizens. The total liability is way too low and will not be able to cover a medium-sized accident, never mind a catastrophic one. It has been estimated that a nuclear accident would cause billions of dollars in damage in personal injuries, death and contamination of the surrounding areas. According to the director of environmental governance for the Pembina Institute, a major accident at the Darlington, Ontario nuclear plant east of Toronto, and very near to my own riding of Hamilton Mountain, could cause damages in the range of an estimated \$1 trillion.

Six hundred and fifty million dollars does not even come close to being adequate and taxpayers will be on the hook for the difference. Does the government and its friends in the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois really believe that \$650 million would be sufficient to clean up and rebuild after such a disaster? Apparently so.

The U.S., on the other hand, has a cap of \$10 billion. Germany, which has experienced the fallout of the Chernobyl meltdown, has an unlimited amount. Many other countries are also moving in that direction toward an unlimited amount of liability. Does the government really believe that Canadian lives, properties and communities are worth less than those of our U.S. and European counterparts? Again, judging by this legislation, one would think so.

Even relatively minor nuclear accidents can have huge costs. In the 1960s, a minor issue in a reactor in Michigan cost an estimated

\$132 million and that was over 40 years ago, but the government, propped up again by its partners in the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois, believes this bill goes far enough.

One of my big concerns is that this bill really is not about protecting Canadians but is all about the Conservative government laying the groundwork to sell Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. Privatization should never be acceptable and particularly not during tough economic times when the value is at its lowest and the Conservatives are contemplating a fire sale.

Perhaps more than anything else, this bill and the debate around it highlight the outrageous costs and potentially devastating risks of nuclear energy, particularly when we compare it to greener, more sustainable alternatives.

For example, the Three Mile Island incident outside Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1979, which my colleagues have already talked about, was a relatively minor nuclear accident, but it cost an estimated \$975 million for the cleanup and investigation. To put the absolute enormity of these costs into context, for the cost of cleaning up Three Mile Island, 1,147,058 100-watt solar panels could have been bought and assembled.

The total subsidies for Canada's state-owned nuclear company, AECL, from 1952 to 2000, were approximately \$16 billion. This is money that could be spent investigating safer methods of energy. But the enormous costs do not just apply when things go bad. The planned construction costs for the third Fermi plant in Michigan will cost an estimated \$10 billion U.S. and take approximately six years to complete. The price of wind power, on the other hand, is dropping fast and can even be had for as low as 16¢ per kilowatt hour right now. Imagine the cost savings to taxpayers and the lower electricity bills for seniors and hard-working families if we could shift to cheaper, safer and more sustainable power. On top of the financial expenses, nuclear energy in general is extremely unsafe, both to the environment and to human life.

• (1715)

There can be no doubt that Canada needs a greener approach in terms of power. Statistics show that Canada ranked 11th in 2008 in a poll measuring wind power capacity. If Canada expects to be seen as a leader in the world, we need to compete in the field of clean renewable energy.

This pressing need is why we in the NDP launched a task force on the economic recovery which I have been proud to co-chair with my colleague, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who has done incredible work on environmental issues over the years.

As we confront the current economic crisis, we must be looking toward the future. We must ensure that the economy of the 21st century is green, sustainable and affordable for ordinary Canadians.

In my hometown of Hamilton, community organizations, environmentalists and ordinary citizens are coming together to imagine and realize that kind of green future. Green Venture, for example, has been doing home energy evaluation since 1997.

*Government Orders*

Environment Hamilton recently received a Trillium Foundation grant in support of its work on a green economic recovery for Hamilton. Environment Hamilton understands that fighting climate change and creating green jobs go hand in hand. I want to congratulate Lynda Lukasik, who is the executive director of Environment Hamilton, her staff and the board at Environment Hamilton for securing this important multi-year grant for advancing the future of our city.

Environment Hamilton has also launched an innovative project aimed at helping Hamilton area faith groups to conserve energy both at home and in their places of worship.

I recognize that nuclear energy provides jobs for a large number of Canadians and has been a part of our economy since 1949. The industry cannot and will not disappear overnight, but the real issue is that Bill C-20 just does not do enough to bring safety to a naturally unsafe and volatile substance. The compensation process would remain cumbersome and force victims of nuclear accidents to go through the courts. We know how costly and inaccessible the courts are as a remedy for this kind of situation.

Furthermore, the bill does not cover any accidents outside of the plant setting. Oil and mining companies and medical facilities use radioactive materials that can be dangerous, but they are not liable for any accidents related to their use or disposal.

It is as clear as it is unfortunate that only the NDP is serious about protecting the interests of ordinary Canadians while the other parties take a rather cavalier attitude to nuclear safety.

I can only hope that this debate will give the government, members of the Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois pause. We need to protect families and communities from the devastating potential of nuclear disasters and this bill simply does not do that.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her speech, especially the part where she said we need to develop other forms of energy. The Bloc agrees completely.

She said several times that we would agree with the limit of \$650 million and that we feel that it is enough. It seems to me that I was clear earlier, and I was speaking on behalf of the Bloc. We feel that this is not enough, but that it is better than \$75 million. We need to vote in favour of the bill, because if we do not, then the \$75 million limit will remain. We cannot change this amount in committee.

The member mentioned that Japan has unlimited liability. What does it mean when a company owns a nuclear facility and has unlimited liability? It means that if the damages run too high, the company will close up shop and go away. That is what it means. The government will be forced to pay. We have to be realistic. We are dealing with companies. The same is true of Germany. Companies can declare bankruptcy and stop paying. Governments are forced to pay.

So yes, we feel that it is not enough, but on the other hand, it is not necessarily true that other countries have found the ideal solution. In

the United States, the limit, which is between \$9 billion and \$11 billion—it is not \$10 billion, it varies—would not be enough in the event of an incident such as the member described earlier. She said that it would cost \$3 trillion if there were a complication in Hamilton. How could an insurance company insure for that much money? That is my question.

[*English*]

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Madam Speaker, I do welcome the question. I think the member and I fundamentally agree that this bill, as it stands, and its predecessor with the lower limit of \$75 million in liability, are wholly inadequate.

The member raised the question about what happens if there is a catastrophic nuclear accident where the costs are in the billions and trillions of dollars. He is quite right in pointing out that we ought to be concerned about the fact that companies will close up shop and Canadian taxpayers will be left with the bill for the cleanup. I think he is absolutely right about that.

That is one of the really disappointing parts of this bill. The government is proposing a solution that in fact only tinkers. It does not provide a comprehensive solution to the question of nuclear liability and, more important, the protection of Canadian citizens as we are contemplating nuclear accidents, be they minor or catastrophic.

That is the part of this debate we have essentially skimmed over by focusing on whether \$75 million is enough or \$650 million is enough.

We know from the recent debate about events at Chalk River, where we are now experiencing an urgent crisis with respect to the supply of medical isotopes that yes, in fact our nuclear facilities are in relative states of disrepair. We need to invest, we need to regulate and we need to ensure nuclear safety.

One of the things that is really troubling to me is that the nuclear safety inspector whom the government fired last year has now been replaced by a political appointee. That is a position that should not be political. We need an independent person in that position. We are not talking about any of those issues though; we are simply talking about whether the amount should be \$75 million or \$650 million.

Canadians deserve better. They deserve a more complete answer. For that reason, I do not think it is good enough to pick a number out of a hat, such as \$650 million, which we know from international experience is not adequate, and say, "Good job. Our job here is done with respect to nuclear liability and compensation".

Canadians deserve better. This House deserves better. We must give this issue much fuller attention.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1725)

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I just wanted to address what I thought was unnecessary fearmongering on the part of the hon. member and some of her colleagues.

In not being happy with the \$650 million number, is there another number she might wish to posit that might be suitable for a disaster of the type she conjures up?

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Madam Speaker, I take some issue with the member suggesting that I am fearmongering.

I have a list of 81 nuclear accidents that are all documented. That is not fearmongering; that is trying to deal with the reality and trying to protect Canadians should such an eventuality happen here. Frankly, I think that is our responsibility.

With respect to the member's question about what is the appropriate amount, frankly the Conservative government has opted to go for the bare minimum. We should be aspiring to go with the best international standards, and those right now in Japan and in Europe are unlimited liability.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member for Hamilton Mountain made an excellent presentation and dealt with many of the concerns. The comments of the previous member who suggested she was fearmongering were really misplaced.

We were told years ago that asbestos was safe, and workers worked their whole lives in asbestos mining and installation. Then we found out it was not so safe after all. We have spent untold amounts of money taking asbestos out of government buildings and paying the long-term liability costs of dealing with asbestos. We were told years ago that DDT was safe, and I recall as a child using it in our garden. Then all of a sudden it was discovered that was not safe. We have found out now that trans fats are unsafe.

The Russians, and I am assuming the Americans as well, have been storing nuclear waste in barrels and dumping them in the oceans. How safe is that going to be? How many years will it take before those barrels start to leak and cause untold damage?

Clearly, we have a very short-term view of things. The economics may dictate that we use these products in the short term, but we do not seem to look into the long term to see what the costs are going to be to do these cleanups.

The member mentioned that we have a list of 81 nuclear accidents. Why would we be proceeding to promote nuclear energy development when we know all of this?

We also know that it takes forever to get an approval. Any time an approval is requested in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta in the next couple of years, people from all political stripes, NDP, Liberal, Conservatives, will be standing up and saying "not in my backyard, you will not build—"

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** At this point I must interrupt the hon. member. He will have approximately 17 minutes to complete his comments when the bill reappears on the order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[English]

**GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT**

The House resumed from May 13 consideration of the motion.

**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 Motion No. 300 under private members' business.

• (1730)

[Translation]

Call in the members.

• (1755)

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

(Division No. 69)

**YEAS**

## Members

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



*Private Members' Business*

Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
Murray  
Neville  
Pacetti  
Paquette  
Pearson  
Pomerleau  
Rae  
Ratansi  
Rodriguez  
Roy  
Savage  
Scarpaleggia  
Siksay  
Simms  
St-Cyr  
Thi Lac  
Tonks  
Valeriotte  
Wasylcia-Leis  
Wrzesnewskyj

Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nadeau  
Ouellet  
Paillé  
Patry  
Plamondon  
Proulx  
Rafferty  
Regan  
Rota  
Russell  
Savoie  
Sgro  
Silva  
Simson  
Szabo  
Thibeault  
Trudeau  
Vincent  
Wilfert  
Zarac— 144

Toews  
Tweed  
Van Kesteren  
Verner  
Warawa  
Watson  
Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Woodworth  
Young— 133

Trost  
Uppal  
Vellacott  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to  
Wong  
Yelich

PAIRED

Nil

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**INCOME TAX ACT**

The House resumed from May 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-288, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (tax credit for new graduates working in designated regions), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division of the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-288 under private members' business.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 70*)

**YEAS**

Members

Abbott  
Aglukkaq  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Baird  
Bernier  
Blackburn  
Block  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Davidson  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Fast  
Flaherty  
Galipeau  
Glover  
Gourde  
Guergis  
Hawn  
Hoback  
Holder  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Lemieux  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
McColeman  
Menzies  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
O'Connor  
Obhrai  
Paradis  
Petit  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Richardson  
Ritz  
Schellenberger  
Shipley  
Smith  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Thompson

**NAYS**

Members

Ablonczy  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Anders  
Ashfield  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Boucher  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Cadman  
Calkins  
Cannon (Pontiac)  
Casson  
Clarke  
Cummins  
Day  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra  
Finley  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Goodyear  
Grewal  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hill  
Hoepfner  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Lobb  
Lunn  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Miller  
Norlock  
O'Neill-Gordon  
Oda  
Payne  
Poilievre  
Raiitt  
Rathgeber  
Richards  
Rickford  
Saxton  
Shea  
Shory  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Tilson

Allen (Welland)  
Andrews  
Ashton  
Atamanenko  
Bagnell  
Beaudin  
Bellavance  
Bevilacqua  
Blais  
Bouchard  
Brisson  
Byrne  
Carrier  
Chow  
Coady  
Cotler  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
DeBellefeuille  
Deschamps  
Dion  
Dryden  
Dufour  
Easter  
Faille  
Foote  
Gagnon  
Gaudet  
Goodale  
Guarnieri  
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)  
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)  
Hall Findlay  
Hughes  
Julian

André  
Angus  
Asselin  
Bachand  
Bains  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Bigras  
Bonsant  
Bourgeois  
Brunelle  
Cardin  
Charlton  
Christopherson  
Coderre  
Crombie  
Cullen  
D'Amours  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Demers  
Dewar  
Dorion  
Duceppe  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Eyking  
Folco  
Fry  
Gameau  
Godin  
Gravelle  
Guay  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Jennings  
Kania

*Private Members' Business*

Karygiannis  
Laforest  
Lalonde  
Layton  
Lemay  
Lessard  
MacAulay  
Malo  
Marston  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Masse  
McCallum  
McTeague  
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
Minna  
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
Murray  
Neville  
Pacetti  
Paquette  
Pearson  
Pomerleau  
Rae  
Ratansi  
Rodriguez  
Roy  
Savage  
Scarpaleggia  
Siksay  
Simms  
St-Cyr  
Thi Lac  
Tonks  
Valerioté  
Wasylcia-Leis  
Wrzesnewskyj

Kennedy  
Laframboise  
Lavallée  
Lee  
Leslie  
Lévesque  
Malhi  
Maloway  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
Mathysen  
McGuinty  
Ménard (Hochelaga)  
Mendes  
Mulcair  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nadeau  
Ouellet  
Paillé  
Patty  
Plamondon  
Proulx  
Rafferty  
Regan  
Rota  
Russell  
Savoie  
Sgro  
Silva  
Simson  
Szabo  
Thibeault  
Trudeau  
Vincent  
Wilfert  
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Norlock  
O'Neill-Gordon  
Oda  
Payne  
Poilievre  
Raitt  
Rathgeber  
Richards  
Rickford  
Saxton  
Shea  
Shory  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Tilson  
Trost  
Uppal  
Vellacott  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Wong  
Yelich

O'Connor  
Obhrai  
Paradis  
Petit  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Richardson  
Ritz  
Schellenberger  
Shipley  
Smith  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Thompson  
Toews  
Tweed  
Van Kesteren  
Verner  
Warawa  
Watson

Woodworth  
Young— 134

PAIRED

Nil

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.  
(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

\* \* \*

[English]

**SUPREME COURT ACT**

The House resumed from May 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-232, An Act to amend the Supreme Court Act (understanding the official languages), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-232 under private members' business.

● (1815)

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

(Division No. 71)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)  
Andrews  
Arthur  
Asselin  
Bachand  
Bains  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Bigras  
Bonsant  
Bourgeois  
Brunelle  
Cardin  
Charlton  
Christopherson  
Coderre  
Crombie  
Cullen  
D'Amours  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Demers

André  
Angus  
Ashton  
Atamanenko  
Bagnell  
Beaudin  
Bellavance  
Bevilacqua  
Blais  
Bouchard  
Brison  
Byrne  
Carrier  
Chow  
Coady  
Cotler  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
DeBellefeuille  
Deschamps

**NAYS**

Members

Abbott  
Aglukkaq  
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Ashfield  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Blaney  
Boucher  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Brown (Barrie)  
Cadman  
Calkins  
Cannon (Pontiac)  
Casson  
Clarke  
Cummins  
Day  
Del Mastro  
Dreesen  
Dykstra  
Finley  
Fletcher  
Gallant  
Goodyear  
Grewal  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hill  
Hoeppner  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Lebel  
Lobb  
Lunn  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Mayes  
McLeod  
Miller

Ablonczy  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Anders  
Arthur  
Baird  
Bernier  
Blackburn  
Block  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Davidson  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Fast  
Flaherty  
Galipeau  
Glover  
Gourde  
Guergis  
Hawn  
Hoback  
Holder  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Lemieux  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
McColeman  
Menzies  
Moore (Fundy Royal)

*Private Members' Business*

Dewar	Dion	Hawn	Hill
Dorion	Dryden	Hoback	Hoepfner
Duceppe	Dufour	Holder	Jean
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Easter	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Eyking	Faillie	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Folco	Footo	Kerr	Komarnicki
Fry	Gagnon	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Garneau	Gaudet	Lauzon	Lebel
Godin	Goodale	Lemieux	Lobb
Gravelle	Guarnieri	Lukiwski	Lunn
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)		MacKenzie	Mayes
Hall Findlay		McColeman	McLeod
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes	Menzies	Miller
Jennings	Julian	Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Kania	Kennedy	O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Laforest	Laframboise	Obhrai	Oda
Lalonde	Lavallée	Paradis	Payne
Layton	Lemay	Petit	Poillievre
Leslie	Lessard	Preston	Raitt
Lévesque	MacAulay	Rajotte	Rathgeber
Malhi	Malo	Reid	Richards
Maloway	Marston	Richardson	Rickford
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Ritz	Saxton
Masse	Mathysen	Schellenberger	Shea
McCallum	McGuinty	Shipley	Shory
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)	Smith	Sorenson
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mendes	Stanton	Storseth
Minna	Mulcair	Strahl	Sweet
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Thompson	Tilson
Murray	Nadeau	Toews	Trost
Neville	Ouellet	Tweed	Uppal
Pacetti	Paillette	Van Kesteren	Vellacott
Paquette	Patry	Verner	Wallace
Pearson	Plamondon	Warawa	Warkentin
Pomerleau	Proulx	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Rae	Rafferty	Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Ratansi	Regan	Woodworth	Yelich
Rodriguez	Rota	Young— 133	
Roy	Russell		
Savage	Savoie		
Scarpaleggia	Sgro		
Siksay	Silva		
Simms	Simson		
St-Cyr	Szabo		
Thi Lac	Thibeault		
Tonks	Trudeau		
Valeriot	Vincent		
Wasylcia-Leis	Wilfert		
Wrzesnewskyj	Zarac— 140		

**NAYS**

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
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	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)

Nil

PAIRED

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6:16 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1820)

[English]

**YOUTH VOLUNTARY SERVICE**

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to finish my remarks in support of Motion No. 299 put forward by the member for Papineau.

When we left off on February 25, I know I have been called long winded but I have never given a three month speech before. However, I am very pleased to continue the discussion on this important motion.

*Private Members' Business*

Since I spoke on this the first time, it has been illuminating for me. The member for Papineau came to my constituency to visit Auburn Drive High School and was able to engage with the young people in my constituency about the importance of youth service and about his motion. I can tell the House that there is a great deal of excitement about that. I want to thank Mike MacKenzie and the other teachers at Auburn Drive High School who arranged that visit. We had originally planned to speak in front of one class. Then they called and asked if it could be two classes and then they asked if it could be three classes. We ended up speaking to about 220 students.

The member for Papineau is an excellent leader, particularly when it comes to young people. He has an issue here that has been very important to him and I think it really strikes a chord with young Canadians. I think this galvanizes young Canadians. I think young Canadians are particularly interested in youth service. They are looking for some options and some ways to be involved in the community and there are a host of benefits that come, both for the young Canadians who might do it but also for the community.

A poll done less than a year ago by EKOS indicated that 80% of Canadians favoured some kind of a national youth service strategy for Canada. Jean-Guy Bigeau, the executive director at that time for Katimavik, said:

A strong national youth service policy would produce visible evidence of our commitment to ensure that this vital segment of our population is included into the socio-economic life of our society.

That is very important. We have great potential. Other countries are doing this kind of thing. We know the gap year in the U.K and countries like Australia and other European countries are doing this. It is very important for Canada to engage in this.

Why now? It would increase dramatically the level of engagement of young Canadians into the political, social and the many dynamics of our society. People say that young people are disengaged but that has not been my experience in my community. They are engaged. They need a reason to be involved in things like politics but there are things they need to do first, which is to get involved in their community, and it also gives them a chance to have a look at Canada.

We have such a big country that most Canadians, by the time they get through high school, have not had a chance to see Canada. We should encourage them to experience the linguistic, cultural and geographic diversity of the country.

I have not had a chance to talk much with the member for Papineau about this but I think there is a huge potential for a group of young Canadians whose potential we are not harnessing and that is young people with disabilities.

I, and I am sure other members, see young Canadians with disabilities in our constituencies who actually go to high school with their colleagues and are very much accepted and embraced by the high school students and feel very much a part of everything that happens in high school. They are involved in the social side of high school and then they graduate. They all celebrate together and then all of their friends go off to university, community college or to a job and many young Canadians with disabilities are left with nothing.

I think there is a huge potential, through the member's initiative, if we can study it at committee and have a look at what other countries are doing. We need to look at what works and what does not work. We need to talk to young Canadians, NGOs and communities who would welcome the opportunity to have young people involved in building the infrastructure of their community and increasing their cultural awareness of what they do.

This is a very positive step and its time has come in Canada. I want to applaud the member for Papineau. This is not a new initiative for him. He has worked on this for much of his relatively young life. He has brought this passion with him to Parliament. It is an entirely worthy project and I hope all members of the House will support it.

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Papineau has brought an interesting issue to public attention.

As my hon. colleague is well aware, community service and engagement increases our skills and knowledge, whether it is learning to build houses with Habitat for Humanity or raising funds for a local charity. It builds social networks by introducing us to new people and strengthening our ties to our communities, while at the same time it strengthens our communities.

Our government firmly believes that the well-being of our society is a responsibility that everyone shares. We recognize and respect the efforts of volunteers across our country who give so generously of their time and talents to enhance the quality of life of Canadians of all ages.

According to the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, volunteer rates are highest among youth, and the average number of hours volunteered is highest among seniors.

Our society is aging and the high number of volunteer hours provided by our country's seniors must gradually be taken up by the younger generations. It is obvious that as a society we need to harness the energy of our young people, as evidenced by their high volunteer rate, by encouraging them to volunteer more of their time.

As members are aware, our government supports many youth programs that encourage our young people to use their talents in their communities, but of course the government is not the most important vehicle for volunteerism. For example, the Canada summer jobs program provides many young people with summer work experiences in the not-for-profit and community organizations.

The latest Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating tells us that nearly 12 million Canadians, or more than a third of the country's population, volunteer their time to charitable and not-for-profit organizations. Their contributions add up to almost two billion hours, or the equivalent of one million full-time jobs in a year.

These volunteers are helping their fellow Canadians in just about every facet of life, from teaching valuable and essential skills, including literacy and computer use, to coaching sports for children and youth. Volunteers are supporting the arts and culture in our communities. They are engaged in projects to protect our environment and helping those less fortunate than themselves, and the list goes on and on.

*Private Members' Business*

I want to emphasize that these millions of volunteers are from every age group in our society.

There are some very interesting numbers available to us. Thanks to our economic action plan, this program will receive additional two year targeted funding of \$10 million per year to enable more employers to hire more summer students. Our plan also announced a one-time grant of \$15 million to the YMCA and the YWCA to place youth internships in not-for-profit organizations, with a focus on environmental projects.

These measures will help young Canadians by providing them with both valuable work experience and earnings.

We know that in a tough economy it can be harder for many young people to find work opportunities. To improve these prospects, our government is also investing \$20 million over two years into targeted programs to strengthen the student employment program in the federal public service.

We are not only helping students and youth find opportunities during the summer, this government supports youth participation all year round. Across the country, countless opportunities are being offered to help young people gain valuable skills while helping their communities.

For example, the youth employment program offered by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is preparing the next generation of workers in the fields of agriculture, agri-food and veterinary medicine.

Parks Canada's Young Canada Works provides high school and post-secondary students with summer jobs in Canada's national parks and historic sites.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's career focus program is designed to help post-secondary graduates prosper in the knowledge-based economy. It provides career-related work experience with Canadian employers. The goal is to help young people acquire hard job skills and become better leaders in their fields.

Under Industry Canada's community access program, young people are helping community organizations and small businesses get on the information highway. At the same time, young people are acquiring the computer skills needed to compete in the knowledge-based economy.

The housing internship initiative for first nations and Inuit youth provides on the job training for first nations and Inuit youth, paving the way to rewarding careers in the housing industry. This program is offered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Other federal departments also offer programs for youth services, including the junior rangers and the valuable and rewarding cadets programs of the Department of National Defence, programs that often inspire young Canadians to serve our country in the armed forces.

Our government has also recognized the need to support volunteerism by young people by changing the Thérèse Casgrain Volunteer Award to include a youth category.

● (1825)

It is clear we are doing our part to promote the spirit of community service and engagement among Canada's youth. Our government is already taking action to engage young Canadians in their country and their communities.

As all members know from experience, there is no shortage of good causes in need of good people to help out within our communities. In fact, the diversity of youth service options supported by our government is a strength in itself, which encourages young Canadians to serve their communities in many different ways, according to their tastes and skills.

There is no question of the value or of the necessity of volunteering to our country. Nor is there any doubt about the need to bring new blood into the ranks of Canada's volunteers. That is why our government is investing in a number of youth programs, to encourage the participation of young Canadians in their communities.

Our government recognizes the value of volunteering and serving in the community. It is an important reality that this government takes to heart. Canada has always enjoyed a strong volunteer spirit. Volunteers are on the front lines of many of our community services, helping the sick and the elderly, helping the fight against crime and violence, celebrating our culture, coaching minor sports, building new economic opportunities in our neighbourhoods and the list is endless.

Simply put, volunteers are Canada's great unsung heroes. Every day volunteers are working quietly behind the scenes to make our lives better.

For example, in my riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook, I think of Christine Kerr from Fonthill, who has been involved with a number of volunteer organizations helping to raise money and doing many things. In 2005 she was honoured with a Governor General's Award of Caring Canadians, which goes a long way. I also think of Kees Van Leeuwen in Grimsby, who passed away last Sunday. He was very involved in the community, not only through volunteering his time but his money as well. I know he will be greatly missed.

These constituents of mine are making a real difference in our communities and I want to thank and commend them for all their efforts.

I also want to recognize the selfless efforts made by countless other Canadians whose voluntary and charitable actions and contributions have assisted untold numbers of their fellow Canadians.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss Motion No. 299, tabled in this House by the member for Papineau.

This motion calls for the introduction of a national voluntary service policy for young people. I must explain that in my speech I will use the French term “service bénévole” instead of “service volontaire,” which I think is a better translation of the text that was likely created here in this House.

*Private Members' Business*

The main reason I am speaking today is that I am worried that this motion clearly infringes on the jurisdictions of Quebec, and, more specifically, of Quebec's department of education, leisure and sport.

Before going into more detail on my position, and, of course, my party's position, I would like to take a few minutes to show not only that this motion infringes on the jurisdictions of Quebec, but also that the means proposed to implement this national voluntary service policy for young people are not new or innovative, do not make it possible to achieve most of the objectives one would expect of such a policy, and would duplicate other means that already exist in Quebec schools, among other things.

Motion No. 299 states:

That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be instructed to consider the introduction in Canada of a national voluntary service policy for young people by analyzing existing programs...

It makes complete sense to me to conduct analyses before introducing this kind of government policy, but we are talking about programs that already exist. The member for Papineau says himself, in his motion, that these programs already exist. There is the evidence of the duplication. If he had done some research before tabling his motion in the House, he would have seen that across Canada, and especially in Quebec, there are policies, means and programs that directly meet the objectives of the policy he is trying to introduce with Motion No. 299.

The motion goes on to say:

...and using the work done by the Voluntary Sector Initiative in 2003...

We must understand while the Voluntary Sector Initiative, or VSI, was doing its work, Quebec was already in the process of negotiating with organizations to develop a policy of recognition and support for the community sector. This policy of recognition had the exact same objectives as the VSI.

Many stakeholders were not able to participate in the VSI because they were in talks with the Government of Quebec. Naturally, the Government of Quebec was not even invited to participate in the development of the policy, most likely because it was already in talks with organizations. The mover would like to base the motion on some document or study, but neither the Government of Quebec nor primary stakeholders from the province were involved. At any rate, there can be no doubt about the result: VSI policies were founded on an English-Canadian model because most of the work was done in English and Quebec was left out of the initiative.

I have a hard time understanding why the member for Papineau thinks that the House will pass this motion, which is based largely on work from more than six years ago that excluded Quebec and used an English-Canadian model. What is even more astonishing is the fact that a Quebec member is moving the motion.

I have to hold back and wrap up my comments on the measures proposed in Motion No. 299. I do not have much time left and would like to talk about other aspects of the motion.

• (1835)

Perhaps I should close with the end of the motion:

...by holding public hearings; and by presenting a report to the House no later than October 2009 that would contain among other things a review of similar policies in the rest of the world and a summary of the evidence heard.

I am taken aback by the administrative burden Motion No. 299 calls for, with all of the work to be done by October 2009. I will have to end my discussion of the measures here, but there are other reasons I oppose this motion.

I have been clear about how this policy would encroach on Quebec's jurisdiction. The policy proposed in Motion No. 299 is based in part on the Katimavik program for youth aged 17 to 21, which provides opportunities to learn skills while performing volunteer work. Katimavik's goal, and the goal of Motion No. 299 with respect to a national voluntary service policy for young people, is to demonstrate Canada's commitment to national voluntary service for young people and the importance of integrating young people into the social and economic fabric of our society.

The principle of integrating young people into society and helping not-for-profit organizations is very commendable, and I agree completely with it. But that is exactly what the Government of Quebec did in 2006 when it created the youth action strategy. After consulting more than 1,200 young people, 70 national groups and the anglophone, cultural and aboriginal communities, Quebec put in place its own youth action strategy. Even though it is still imperfect, this strategy, which was developed just three years ago, is bound to improve with time.

Quebec's youth action strategy has a number of objectives, including fostering young people's entry into the workforce and enhancing their participation in society, in their community and in the world at large.

The wheel was invented around 3500 B.C.E. in Sumer, in lower Mesopotamia. We do not need to reinvent the wheel today. Quebec already has a youth policy with almost the same objectives as Motion No. 299. Not only does this motion interfere in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, but it also amounts to needless duplication of effort, because Quebec already has its own youth policy.

What is even worse, the proposed policy also represents an intrusion into education. The Katimavik program provides participants with continuous learning in five areas: leadership, official languages, environmental stewardship, cultural discovery and healthy lifestyle. The new education program introduced by the Minister of Education, Recreation and Sport has objectives that are exactly the same as Katimavik's. I will quote some of them. Page 24 of Quebec's new education program states:

Each discipline can play a part and provide an opportunity to cultivate in the student the qualities essential to realizing his or her potential: creativity, self-confidence, initiative, leadership...

This is almost exactly what Motion No. 299 says.

*Private Members' Business*

In conclusion, this motion is a flagrant intrusion into the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. In addition, it amounts to needless duplication of effort. I am therefore opposed to this motion.

•(1840)

[*English*]

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this motion.

I want to begin by congratulating my colleague, the member for Papineau, for the work he has done in this field and certainly for bringing a real emphasis and focus on young people, something which, unfortunately, is sadly missed in the House, much to the great loss of Canada as a whole. Many of us would argue that to not discuss the issues that young people face in our country is to do a disservice to the population that we represent.

We in my party see this motion as a positive initiative. Certainly the focus on a national voluntary service policy is seen as something that is positive. It is something that could certainly contribute not only to recognizing the work that is already being done but also to strengthening the volunteer sector and the work that young people do or are interested in doing in making their communities, regions and ultimately Canada a better place in which to live.

The amendment moved by my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie was well considered with respect to the timing to allow the human resources committee to engage in its important work with regard to poverty. Poverty is a very serious issue that Canada faces and the House and the current government have been extremely negligent in dealing with it.

In terms of the national voluntary service, it is extremely important to examine the kinds of organizations and programming we have right now. It is especially important and extremely necessary to engage in consultations. We need the opportunity to hear from people in the field and on the ground, young people in this area or people who are at the helm of many of these organizations. We need to hear from them what exactly the needs are and what they see as the way to move forward. Any program we come up with in the House, unless it has the proper consultation, could be seen as ineffective and in many ways could prevent or stand in the way of some of the good work that people on the ground would like to engage in.

I would like to highlight some of the exciting volunteer work that already takes place in the riding I represent in northern Manitoba. I am proud to represent one of the youngest regions in Canada. The median age is 26. There are many young leaders all across the region that I represent. They are on school boards and city councils. They run for all sorts of elected positions on committees. They perform leadership roles, are the heads of organizations and community groups and start important campaigns.

I would like to particularly highlight some of the important work that some young leaders are engaging in and who usually do not get the recognition they deserve. A while ago we heard some glaring statistics about suicide on first nations reserves in northern Canada. While this is a stark reality that all of us and certainly the government should be dealing with, it inspires me that so many

young people in communities that have been afflicted with such pain are actually taking a leadership role. They are engaging with young people and looking at proactive solutions in dealing with the needs for recreation, counselling and general support for young people so that they do not have to face such difficult situations. These leaders include Saul Harper, Bobby Monias, Frankie Manoawakeesic, Allison McDougall, D'Arcy Linklater, and the list goes on.

More recently, I had the chance to work with exciting young people in a campaign that we felt very strongly about to save our CBC station. I am very proud to say that that campaign was successful. Despite the economic difficulties that CBC is facing, it listened to our community and recognized that it is important. What was very exciting was the way in which young people who have grown up with such an important institution came out, donated their time and said they were going to show the outside world what CBC meant to their community. They took a leadership role in doing that.

•(1845)

I would like to highlight the important work of young people in the Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre in Thompson, Club 53 in The Pas, and the Flin Flon friendship centre. Young people, including Amy Jackson, are playing a leadership role in making sure there are opportunities for young people to get together after school and engage in positive activities rather than looking elsewhere for support.

Something that we need to be supporting as a Parliament, but certainly something the government needs to recognize is the serious need to fund recreation and opportunities for young people to come together in positive and healthy ways.

I would like to recognize the important work being done by the Boys and Girls Club in Thompson, and the countless hours that volunteers put in year after year to maintain such an important club for young people, who are often disenfranchised and on the margins of the community.

I would like to highlight the work done by the Adams Lake youth council. Young people set out to march to Winnipeg from their isolated communities that have no roads, except for two or three months a year, to bring forward the need for attention to the issues that they, as young people, are facing.

I would also like to highlight the important work being done in our sports community by young people. Whether it is hockey, swimming, skating or soccer, the general sports community for us in northern Manitoba and certainly in northern Canada is so important, given our smaller communities and in many ways our lack of access to recreational opportunities. We need to make sure that we come together to promote healthier lifestyles, to bring the community together and in that way strengthen the community.

*Private Members' Business*

There are so many examples of the exciting work that young people are doing. Only yesterday I had the honour of attending the millennium scholarship dinner. I was surrounded by so many bright young people with so much promise, young people who in many ways were given these scholarships because of their volunteer work, because of their commitment to their communities. This is a fantastic example of recognition of that volunteerism. It is very sad to note that the millennium scholarship program is one of the programs being cut by the Conservative government.

In many ways it is so important that we look at all of our regions to learn about the exciting work that young people are doing, to be inspired by that work and to see how we can support that kind of work.

It is important to make some notes on the issue of the public hearings. There is no sense in engaging in a process if it is not thorough and if it does not recognize the diversity of our nation. I would like to spend a moment talking about the need to look out for that diversity.

I am proud and honoured to participate in the status of women committee in this House. It has been a very interesting exposure to the way in which issues of gender are sorely missed by many of our policies and obviously, in many ways it is to the detriment of achieving gender equality in our country. We need to ensure that those public hearings recognize the experiences of gender, for example, the women who volunteer in certain sectors rather than others. In many ways women volunteers would be seen in terms of child care, for example.

On regional issues, we are an area of Canada which, as I noted, has a great deal of volunteerism, but it is difficult to get to. I would like to hear that this consultation will happen in northern Canada and in rural Canada as well, where the voices of young people are often not heard. They certainly need to be acknowledged as part of these hearings.

There are a number of things that ought to be recognized as well as a number of issues that young people face on a daily basis in a country like ours, whether it is student debt, high unemployment, rates of poverty, discrimination, lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable child care and the list goes on. I would hope that not only would we look out for important initiatives such as this one, but that we would make sure that there are concrete measures, legislation, that support our young people and that we do not just pay lip service to them.

• (1850)

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of a worthy initiative that will be of significant benefit to young people across Canada and to volunteer programs throughout the country. I applaud the member for Papineau for this initiative. I recall that it was his late father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who inspired me to enter politics and be more active in my community.

I have seen first-hand the great work of committed individuals in my own riding, groups of selfless people coming together to work toward a common goal, a goal that is not for personal or economic benefit but simply that of improving living conditions for others within the community and across Canada.

The motion we are debating today proposes the fostering of enduring principles, intelligent planning and stable assistance for the generations of young people who are the country's future.

This motion would not only recognize the significance and accomplishments of volunteer organizations but it would also provide the necessary tools and resources to better equip them so that they may enjoy continued success. It would improve transparency and communication between not-for-profit groups across the country and, in this way, allow for a dialogue to better identify what is effective and what is not.

By supporting measures to assist these programs, we support a vision of Canada's future where communities, rather than a solitary individual, are the focus. I believe that strong communities most definitely mean a strong Canada.

Facing the difficulties of the economic downturn, we must necessarily address the important issues of the moment, issues such as economic stimulus and municipal infrastructure, but we must not neglect our preparations for the future.

Canada needs lasting and enduring policies, policies that strengthen communities and the country as a whole. Such initiatives lend assistance not only during the hardships of the moment but for the unforeseen challenges that we cannot yet predict.

Challenging times are the greatest opportunity for the creation of enduring, meaningful policies. Many of Canada's greatest initiatives, such as the national pension plan, the national railway and the universal health care, were a response to times of great adversity.

Today, Canada is not facing war or natural disaster but financial insecurity and job losses. How will we respond to these difficulties? We will use this hardship to unite our country with a great national vision.

My hon. colleague's motion asks for great things from Canada's young people. However, it offers great things as well. This is a fully voluntary program of action. It invites young people across Canada to seek opportunities to help build better communities and a better country. In return, we are called upon to provide needed resources.

The central tenets of this motion are the central tenets of what it means to be Canadian: unity of purpose, community and generosity. These are the attributes for which Canadians are known the world over. It is this kinship and compassionate regard for our neighbours that have contributed so greatly to Canada's success.

I am reminded of the words of a former prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, who said, "...without the vision of human brotherhood, the Canadian nation could never have come into being...The unity of Canada is vital to the continued existence of Canada".

Today we have the opportunity to further strengthen this vision of Canadian solidarity by building a bridge from the one to the many, from the individual to the collective and from the local to the national.



In a globalizing world and in a constantly changing universe, today's young people feel disconnected from a world that seems to think there is a minimum age for social contribution. We must combat feelings of estrangement in young people and endorse the message that social contribution is possible at any age by providing them with the tools to do so.

● (1855)

Today's young people must stop being told they are leaders of tomorrow and realize that they can be leaders here and now. They can be engaged and active in their community, rather than biding their time in a society of adults. As parliamentarians, it is to us that the task of sending this message is given.

Historically, there has been little effort to understand youth disengagement. It is seen as an existential crisis that only maturity can solve. Rarely is it considered that perhaps it is not disinterest but frustration that motivates this disengagement.

This is not an issue on which we should stand still. We need to extend greater attention to these pressing issues and assist our young people in moving forward and support them in their development as citizens of this great country.

I ask each member in this House to reflect not only on the immense power of engaged youth but also on their development into engaged and compassionate adults. This is not an issue restricted to the legislatures but an opportunity to recognize a worthy goal and to commit all levels of government in an open dialogue to promote it.

It is said that before we can run, we must learn to walk. However, before we can walk, we must see someone else walk. Similarly, we must recognize that the intrinsic benefits of volunteering are not always innate and in this way, we must consider what models exist to demonstrate a positive example of volunteerism, as well as its importance to our country. There is, after all, no short-term or long-term benefit to short-changing today's young people. They are indeed Canada's future.

This motion, however, would do more than provide opportunities for young people, which is certainly a noble goal in itself. It would also respond to the needs of communities. Communities with no means of presenting volunteer opportunities to young people would have the infrastructure to do so. As well, communities which currently do have such means would have more tools to meet their goals more effectively.

Canada's celebrated diversity brings with it the need for a flexible framework. It would be a mistake to believe that this volunteer infrastructure seeks to regiment existing volunteer efforts.

The spectrum of needs for a given community is as diverse as the number of communities themselves. Rural communities differ from urban communities, just as the needs of small towns differ from those of the suburbs. With these differences come demands for a wide variety of projects.

This motion presents the framework capable of answering these demands within a system of disclosure; a democratic and thoughtful system, one committed to researching the best solutions on a topic that has the dramatic potential to re-engage our youth, enrich our

### *Private Members' Business*

communities and foster strong principles of partnership among our citizens.

The question that this motion addresses is not how we can get more Canadians to volunteer, although it is certainly a desirable and predictable effect of this motion, but to answer how we get those who want to volunteer the means to do so, and certainly to answer how we can volunteer better.

I am the first to admit that these questions are challenging in our world of so many distractions, but I am not willing to step aside and allow them to be neglected. Difficult questions must be met with intelligent discussion, a review of existing programs around the world and multilateral government co-operation. Difficult questions should be met with democracy, and it is exactly this that my hon. colleague from Papineau proposes.

In the words of the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it". While the future may seem uncertain, we have today the opportunity to invent it and, in this way, support a Canada that emphasizes community, that emphasizes selflessness, and that emphasizes more fully Canada's young people.

● (1900)

**The Deputy Speaker:** There being no further members rising to speak, we will go to the hon. member for Papineau for his five-minute right of reply.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to recognize and thank the member for Davenport, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, the member for Churchill, and other members who spoke very eloquently about my initiative.

I would also like to recognize the members from the government side of the House who spoke very eloquently and passionately about the importance of volunteerism, the importance of service and the importance of young people.

[*Translation*]

It is a great honour to be able to be here and, more importantly, to be able to tell the people of Papineau that we have achieved something important. For two hours in this House, the topic of debate was young people. We talked about the future, volunteering, and the involvement of young people in their communities and in society. Regardless of the results of the vote on this matter, young people have been the focus, have been validated and encouraged for two hours. That is in itself a victory for the young people of Papineau and all young Canadians. This has been possible thanks to the trust that the people of Papineau have placed in me.

I would like to talk about this motion. I propose referring the matter to committee in order to study a policy, not a program or any sort of interference, but a policy whereby this Parliament, this government, would engage young people in building our country. That is what is needed. That is the answer to the major problems ahead. We live in a world with so many challenges and we have to start making major changes in terms of the environment, the economy and justice for the most vulnerable members of society. We must cultivate a new way of thinking.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[English]

Albert Einstein once said that the problems we have created for ourselves cannot be solved at the level of thinking that created them. If we are to bring in to the House, to the country, to the world a fresh level of thinking, it must be through our young people. It must be in our capacity to give to our young people the chance to express themselves, not just through their voices but through their actions, day in and day out, of shaping this world to be better, stronger, fairer, more responsible toward the long term.

Our capacity to do that depends on the kind of vision that drives us in the House. The one thing that will happen when we get more young people involved in their communities, connected to their world and engaged and interested in what politics has to offer them, is we begin to shift in our thinking toward being more responsible to the kinds of things they are worried about, which are all the big picture, long-term issues. We shift away from the fight over what is urgent and what is immediate and start involving and encouraging talk about what is important and what is long term about the country we are trying to build.

After the first hour of debate, I was asked by a member opposite if I was trying to generate something that we were giving to young people, was it about turning President Kennedy's expression on its head and actually trying to get government to do for youth what we could? The problem is youth are asking what they can do for their country every day.

Every year tens of thousands of young people ask what they can do for their county, and every year we in the House have an inadequate response because we are not giving them the opportunities to do what they want to do, which is serve, build, create the Canada we need for our children and their children. The kinds of thinking we need to bring forward will happen only when we have young people committed, engaged, involved, powerful citizens and agents of change shaping their world.

● (1905)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** On division.  
(Amendment agreed to)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The next question is on the main motion as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion as amended?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, June 3, 2009 immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[English]

HEALTH

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is in sorrow that I address the House this evening in terms of the lost 22 lives in the listeriosis outbreak of last year and the need for a straightforward public health inquiry into the response to the outbreak from all the government agencies. Only with honest and open answers on the failures during that crisis can we be better prepared for the possibility of another outbreak in our food system.

What were the communication failures between different agencies at various levels of government? Why was no mandatory food recall issued immediately by the CFIA itself?

We need candid responses to these questions, and we cannot allow ideology and politics to ever affect our response to a crisis as the Harper government did. The safety of the—

● (1910)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member knows that she can only use riding names or titles.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The safety of the Canadian people must be given the highest consideration in our decision-making process. Unfortunately, the idea that a looming election or possible election interfered with straightforward communications with the people of Canada raises very serious questions in terms of what the public deserved and needed to know at that time.

We need much greater coordination between our food safety bodies. It was very concerning to us today in the subcommittee on food safety to realize that Ontario has come forward with only one report at this time. Canada has three separate reports: one from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, one from the Public Health Agency of Canada, and one from Health Canada. The reports themselves conflict with one another. Now we have an inquiry set up by the Prime Minister that reports directly to the minister who seems to have been implicated in this shoddy response.

President Obama has tasked his secretaries of health and agriculture with reviewing every federal law that has to do with food safety.

In a time when such comprehensive efforts are being undertaken across the border, what is preventing us from taking an extensive look at our own food safety framework? Since we import a great deal of foodstuffs from the United States, we also must put more effort into the harmonization of regulations. Working together with American food safety officials can only make it stronger.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The questions that have been raised already are very concerning to those on the subcommittee. We have only begun our important work and already it seems that the government of the day is interfering.

We had asked that there be at least six hours, twice a week, from April 20 until this time. I am sorry to report to the House that out of a possible 54 hours that the committee should have met, we have only met 27 times. Extraordinarily important ministers like Minister Clement, Minister Aglukkaq have not appeared—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have to stop the hon. member there again for the second time. She may only use titles or ridings.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and the former minister of health have not yet appeared before the committee and the committee does not seem to be able to get through the padding of panels by witnesses, not requested by the opposition, and the ability to drag this out.

We were very concerned at the testimony of Lynn Wilcott from BC CDC who said that during routine food calls, the CFIA was very collaborative and demonstrated a working relationship, but during an outbreak it failed to share information openly and freely.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to speak about what our government is doing to preserve the safety of Canada's food supply.

[*English*]

To answer some of the comments made by my colleague, the Subcommittee on Food Safety is going very well. We are working in co-operation. The committee is responsible for its own operations. This is the first I have heard of complaints regarding how often the committee is meeting. We are the ones who offered to extend committee meetings, and we have done so.

It was interesting to hear my colleague's comment. She only wants opposition witnesses invited. There are other witnesses other than opposition witnesses. We feel the subcommittee needs to hear from all Canadians, not just those from whom the opposition would wish to hear.

Our government is committed to keeping the food we eat safe and ensuring Canadians and consumers around the world have confidence in the products our farmers grow and in the food on our grocery store shelves. We are reinvesting in food safety after the Liberal spending cuts in the nineties. Under the Liberals, food safety funding was cut in 1994. It was cut again in 1995. If that were not bad enough, they cut it again in 2005.

Under our government, the CFIA budget has only increased and CFIA has more resources available to it than ever before. Food safety funding, which was cut by the previous Liberal government, has been increased now by \$113 million.

Regarding listeriosis, we look forward to seeing the report from the independent investigator appointed by the Prime Minister. We want to improve on food safety where we can. We have already begun implementing changes to make our food safety system stronger.

Immediately following the 2008 listeriosis outbreak, the CFIA acted to assess and improve industry practices for the sanitation of equipment used to manufacture ready-to-eat meat and introduced new procedures for sanitation of plant areas where ready-to-eat meats were processed.

The CFIA has introduced new inspection procedures to ensure that all company microbiological results for listeria are reviewed by inspectors on a daily basis and any corrective actions are taken by the company if positive results are found.

This is part of our compliance verification system, or CVS. Some, including the Liberals, have criticized this system, but Bob Kingston, the president of the Agricultural Union which represents inspectors, told the following to the food safety committee, "I also want to make clear the compliance verification system as a system, we don't fault it...Having a checklist scheduled approach to verifying that the people you're regulating are doing what they say they are doing, we can't see that as a bad thing".

The CFIA also undertook a review of its directives regarding the control of listeria and ready-to-eat meat production and this review resulted in new directives, which were published on February 27. The new directives require that industry implement environmental testing of food contact surfaces to complement the end product tests they now conduct. The CFIA has also increased the frequency of its own verification testing of finished product and complemented this with verification testing of food contact services.

When asked if it was a mistake to eliminate environmental testing, which the Liberals did, and whether that testing could have prevented the outbreak, CFIA inspection supervisor from the affected Maple Leaf plant, Mr. Don Irons, told the food safety subcommittee "we could have possibly".

•(1915)

[*Translation*]

Food safety is the CFIA's highest priority and the requirements for food safety are more stringent now than ever before.

[*English*]

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the history lesson. I feel obligated to ask the member to look forward. When the chief public health officer for Ontario says, "the lack of coordination contributed to public confusion and created the impression that the outbreak was not being well managed, which affected public trust and confidence in the public health system", the government needs to do better.

The chief public health officer goes on to say that it is clear "Canada has not yet implemented a national outbreak management strategy that incorporates all federal agencies and ensures coordination with provincial ministries".

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We need to have the food-borne illness outbreak response framework redone. Canada must remain a leader for food safety in the global realm and we can only accomplish this with more transparency and a more comprehensive framework for our regulatory system.

I call upon the government to do this now.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, we indeed are moving forward, which is what I pointed out in my earlier remarks, and we continue to move forward. There are three lessons learned documents that have been presented to the public. We are reviewing these. We too want to improve the system.

The CFIA is committed to continuous improvement in the meat inspection system and implements necessary adjustments as warranted by science and best practices. The CFIA had taken action previously regarding enhanced requirements for the sanitation of slicing equipment, and its oversight of sanitation and equipment maintenance.

[*Translation*]

The agency also carries out an in-depth examination of the health hazard assessment plans implemented by the industry in all facilities that produce ready to eat meats.

We carry out an ongoing assessment of our programs and make the improvements required to preserve the health of Canada's food.

[*English*]

In my closing remarks, I will point out once again that the Liberals cut funding for food safety. We have increased funding for food safety.

[*Translation*]

ARTS AND CULTURE

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am taking part in this adjournment debate this evening in order to get a proper reply to a question I asked on February 25. I pointed out that, from Japan to Belgium, no less than 23 arts promoters from 17 countries had written to the Prime Minister asking that his government reinstate assistance programs that allow Quebec and Canadian artists to tour abroad. The Prime Minister did not even bother to acknowledge receipt of the letters. I therefore asked the Prime Minister whether he was going to respond to the arguments of these international promoters who are confirming how effective those programs are and re-establish the funding for those programs.

The last time I took part in an adjournment debate in this House with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, which was last evening, he commented that it was just like *Groundhog Day*. He is absolutely right about that, and I would recommend that he see that movie again. He will then see that the way to stop the same day repeating over and over, with the same things happening ad infinitum, he himself will have to change his attitude. He will have to change his answers. He will have to change arguments and come up with the right conclusion, which is that artists and cultural organizations in all parts of Quebec absolutely need the programs that have been cut, particularly Trade Routes and PromArt.

In the House, the parliamentary secretary and the minister continue to repeat the same arguments. I will list them and ask him to not repeat them and to come up with other arguments if he does not want this evening to be another déjà vu straight out of *Groundhog Day*.

He says that Canadian Heritage has established \$22 million in funding this year to help our artists on the international scene. That does not even come close to the truth. We do not have \$22 million to help artists on the international scene. I went over the figures with cultural organizations. I went over the figures with experts. We looked at the programs one by one, but we did not find \$22 million.

Furthermore, if everything is in place to help artists on the international scene, why does the Grands Ballets Canadiens have a shortfall of \$150,000 in the budget for its tour of the Middle East in June? If the funding existed, they would have found it a long time ago in the department's or the Canada Council's programs.

The money is not there and this been very problematic for cultural organizations such as the Grands Ballets Canadiens, which does not have enough money for their tour. They will run a tour deficit. In fact, year after year, and under other governments—including Liberal governments that were less reluctant than the Conservatives—they received subsidies to pay for the transportation of 32 dancers, their luggage, sets and costumes. This time, they do not have that assistance because the government created a huge hole in the funding and there is not enough money to export cultural products.

Of course, he always goes back to the Bloc Québécois stimulus package, which obviously does not include cultural matters. These are all one-time measures that avoid creating a structural deficit. He is mixing apples and oranges.

• (1920)

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour once again to be here in your presence and to respond to these questions.

Last time, I did refer to the movie *Groundhog Day*. That is of course when every day Bill Murray wakes up and it is the same day again, and the same song on the radio. The same song is kind of what I am getting at.

Every day it is the same thing from the Bloc Québécois, despite the fact that the member knows what the truth is on these issues.

I am going to speak a little bit on touring and promotion, and then I am going to come back to Les Grands Ballets, as referred to by the hon. member.

With respect to international promotion, I would say that my department's ongoing investment has involved since 2007-8 over \$22 million to support Canadian culture abroad through its portfolio agencies and delivery partners such as the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm Canada, the Association for the Export of Canadian Books, the National Film Board and FACTOR/Musicaction.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The member also referred to the strategic review in the department. The member knows full well that the overall spending in the department has increased substantially. The member knows full well that the strategic review only affected the tiniest portion of the overall budget of \$2.31 billion that flows into the Canadian Heritage portfolio.

However, once again it is *Groundhog Day*. It is déjà vu all over again. We are back with the same questions once again. The reason why I have to keep giving the same answers is because the member keeps asking the same questions.

I would love to give different answers. I would love for this to be more inspiring for the people at home, but when I only have this to work with, I have to go with what I have got.

With respect to Les Grands Ballets, I gave an answer to this question in the House today. The member mentioned how it had to raise money to go overseas. Many groups have to raise money if they want to travel overseas. I am very happy that Les Grands Ballets is going. That is fantastic news. However, the government has provided substantial support to Les Grands Ballets.

For example, I pointed out today in the House that in 2004-5 from the endowment fund, which is a fund that the government partners with arts groups, Les Grands Ballets in 2004-5 received \$510,000. This year from this Conservative government Les Grands Ballet will receive almost \$1.5 million. That is three times as much money in government support just from the endowment fund.

However, that is not all. From the Canada Council for the Arts, it is also receiving an additional \$1.2 million. That is \$2.7 million. With respect to touring, it also received a further \$20,000 from the Canada Council for the Arts strictly for touring.

It is *Groundhog Day* again. I will be back with the same question and I will be back giving the same answer. The reality is that this government is the most supportive government in Canada's history when it comes to Canada's culture and arts promotion and arts in general.

The member knows this full well, but what she does not stand up and say is how the Bloc stimulus plan does not have a thing, not a thing, on the arts in it at all. Lucky for artists in this country that when this government came forward with an economic action plan, we made sure the arts got a big piece of that economic stimulus package.

●(1925)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée:** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed like in *Groundhog Day*, and it will be for some time. We have had *Groundhog Day* moments twice in the same debate.

I told him—quite clearly, I thought—that support for artists and cultural organizations could not be included in the Bloc Québécois' recommended economic recovery plan because our plan, which is a very realistic one, proposes short-term measures, whereas artists need long-term measures, programs like PromArt and Trade Routes. Those two programs helped artists tour abroad.

Just because they get subsidies through other programs, do a great job and pursue various activities, does not mean that they should lose a critical source of funding. I mentioned Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, but there are many other theatre and dance companies that really needed those programs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the two programs just cited, one of which is under the Department of Foreign Affairs and not in the Department of Canadian Heritage, have a total worth of about \$11 million and that was for all artists right across the country.

Les Grands Ballets on its own is receiving \$2.7 million from this government. This is record funding from the endowment. That is what this government is doing. We are standing behind artists. We are helping them. We are promoting the arts. We are providing the stability that they need.

The member can side step and say that the Bloc wanted to put the arts in but it just could not find a spot for it in a document half an inch thick. That does not cut it. When it comes down to it, the Bloc omitted the arts and culture from its stimulus package, and our government did not.

It is *Groundhog Day*, it is déjà vu, and I will be back with the same answer again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:28 p.m.)



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