



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, October 1, 2009**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 1, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

[*Translation*]

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*Prayers*

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## COMPETITION ACT

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** 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 of the Canadian section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas respecting its participation in the special parliamentary dialogue held prior to the fifth summit of heads of state and the governments of the Americas held in Port of Spain Trinidad and Tobago, April 16 and 17, 2009.

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[*Translation*]

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-451, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to introduce this bill to amend the Criminal Code.

This bill makes it an offence to commit an act of mischief in relation to property motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on religion, race, colour, sex, language or sexual orientation.

[*English*]

It is unfortunate that hate crimes have been committed in this country at community centres, religious institutions and educational institutions. The purpose of the bill is to take action against these crimes and to ensure that all Canadians are protected from such violence. The Canadian Jewish Congress, for instance, is in great support of this legislation.

I hope the bill will enjoy the support of my colleagues, as it does by my seconder, who I thank dearly, my colleague from Random—Burin—St. George's.

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

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-452, An Act to amend the Competition Act (inquiry into industry sector).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am here in the House today to respond to my fellow citizens' concerns about an issue that makes voters in my riding angry year after year.

Our role as members of Parliament is to listen to people. Many people in my riding have contacted me by phone, by email or during my many encounters with voters in my riding and across Quebec. I listened to what people had to say, and I decided to take action.

I decided to take action because of the shameless price-gouging by the big oil companies that affects us all.

Quebeckers recently found out that a large group of retailers was conspiring to fix gas prices on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. The investigation was conducted in response to complaints submitted to the Competition Tribunal.

Across Quebec, people found it highly suspicious that the price of gas at every retailer fluctuated in such a coordinated fashion just before long weekends and summer holidays.

Last week, CAA confirmed that gasoline retailers have a huge profit margin.

All this time, people have been held hostage. The bill I am introducing today will give the Competition Bureau true investigative powers.

Once my bill has made it through the approval process in the House, the Competition Bureau will be able to undertake its own investigations and hit oil companies where it counts, in their pockets.

*Business of Supply*

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

\* \* \*

• (1010)  
[English]

**PETITIONS**

## RURAL AIRPORTS

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I present a petition today from hundreds, virtually all of the residents from the communities around the Williams Lake and Quesnel who are demanding that services be restored to their airports.

Rural airports across Canada are receiving cuts through Transport Canada and through NAV CANADA to essential services required for businesses and basic safety for these communities.

It is an impressive petition. I hope the government takes it up and forthwith reverses these decisions to cut services to rural airports right across this country.

## SUICIDE

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a number of petitions from over 700 people from British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario and Saskatchewan.

The petitioners call upon the government to enable prosecution of those who encourage or counsel someone to commit suicide by updating Canadian criminal codes to reflect the new realities of 21st century broadband access and to fund education programs to protect vulnerable youth and help them to protect themselves from online predators.

## LIBRARY BOOK RATES

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions I want to present today.

Two of the petitions are from constituents who are looking at having the library book rate for public libraries expanded, that the rates be reduced and that the government support the private members' bill, Bill C-322, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (library materials), which would protect and support the library book rate and extend it to our audio-visual materials.

## FRESHWATER FISH MARKETING CORPORATION

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by over 700 constituents with regard to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to amend the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act to allow for the dual marketing of fish species throughout the prairie region. This petition is largely supported by first nation and Métis fishers, as well as other commercial fishers throughout my riding.

## CANADIAN SIKH ASSOCIATION

**Mr. Andrew Kania (Brampton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of my constituents with

respect to the 25th anniversary of the June 4, 1984 killings that took place in the Golden Temple and 38 other gurdwaras in the Punjab.

On behalf of the members of the Canadian Sikh Association and the constituents, I would like to submit this petition.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley is rising. The normal practice is for a member to be recognized once. He might have presented two petitions at the same time.

Is there consent to allow the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to present another petition at this time?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I apologize for presenting petitions twice.

The second petition contains signatures collected from virtually every resident of Queen Charlotte Islands, Haida Gwaii who are petitioning against the service cutbacks that Canada Post has since issued. We are seeing postal delivery times of three to four weeks to this collection of 5,000 people who live on the Islands. It is an incredible travesty and is hurting businesses and essential services throughout the region. It must be reversed. Canada Post works on behalf of all Canadians wherever they might live. It is unacceptable and the response from the Islands has been most extraordinary. I have never seen a set of petitions coming from Skeena of this size and magnitude.

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**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT POLICIES

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.)** moved:

That this House has lost confidence in the government.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to announce formally that the official opposition has lost confidence in the government. This is a serious step and we owe an explanation both to this House and to the Canadian people of our grounds for doing so.

[Translation]

We have lost confidence in this government. We are standing up for those who have been abandoned by this government. I will try to provide some concrete reasons why we will no longer support this government.

*Business of Supply*

•(1015)

[English]

First, the Conservatives have lost control of the public finances of our country. A year ago they were at the edge of deficit and by February they were at a deficit of \$32 billion. Suddenly, four or five weeks later, it is at \$50 billion. At the end of the summer they announced that the deficit was at \$56 billion.

Who in the House can actually believe this figure will not climb somewhere near \$60 billion by Christmas? This is a terrible record of failure and someone must stand up in the House and call it what it is: abject failure on the public finance management of this country. They have no plan to get us out.

All Canadians must understand that this deficit will hang around the necks of Canadians like a stone. It jeopardizes our capacity to provide adequate health care for Canadians in the future. It jeopardizes our capacity to help seniors and guarantee a secure retirement for our fellow citizens. It jeopardizes our capacity to help the unemployed. That is the first reason we cannot have confidence in the government.

The second reason is a question we need to ask ourselves. We have a \$56 billion deficit and what do we get for it? Do we have some grand new project that renews the infrastructure of our country, makes us stronger and makes us more united? What we have instead is a reward program for the Conservative Party of Canada. Conservative ridings have benefited disproportionately from this stimulus expenditure and we have the figures to prove it.

Then there is the issue of actually getting the money out the door. We have seen the press releases and have heard the announcement that 90% has been committed but when we actually look at the stimulus funding that we can see on the ground, 12% has gone out the door. I was at a soy bean field in Burlington. The Conservatives wish us to believe that it is a car park. I am here to tell everyone that it is still a soy bean field.

There is worse than that. The government has used taxpayer money and spent six times more promoting its own inaction plan than it has to promote the public health of Canadians and warn them about the dangers of H1N1.

That brings me to the third issue, which is the protection of the public health of Canadians. With H1N1, every Canadian can see on television that in other countries people are already being vaccinated. We are still waiting for a plan. We are still waiting for the vaccine. It is the government's responsibility and it has not stepped up.

If people were to go to aboriginal communities and talk to the chiefs, as I did yesterday, they listen with disbelief as the health minister tells them that 90% of them are ready for the H1N1 epidemic. They know perfectly well that their nursing stations are not ready. What did they get from the government? They got body bags.

We are not finished. Across the country, cancer and heart patients are waiting for nuclear medicine and diagnostics because twice on the government's watch over four years it has failed to supply an adequate amount of nuclear isotopes for the Canadian medical profession. This record of failure is just not good enough.

As if that was not enough, when the Canadian health system is under constant relentless attack from our ideological friends south of the border, what do we hear from the other side of the House? There is total deafening silence. That is public health.

Let us look at what Conservatives have done in respect of Canadian technologies and jobs. The government has been in office for nearly four years and the litany of great Canadian companies that have gone under, been bought or been traded away is getting longer and longer: Nortel, Inco, Falconbridge, Stelco and Alcan. There has been no attempt to defend Canadian jobs and Canadian technologies.

We are now in the absurd situation of having a technological hub, which is a world leader in the Kitchener—Waterloo area, sitting there watching while Canadian patents and technologies developed at home are sold to their competitors. How are we to create the jobs of tomorrow unless we have a government that stands up for Canadian technology today?

•(1020)

We welcome public investment but we want transparent public reviews so Canadian workers and employers can know exactly what undertakings foreign companies give when they come to this country, so that we actually do have net benefit for this country.

Let me move to another area where the government has failed Canadians. It has failed to protect Canadians abroad. For those named Suaad Mohamud or Abdelrazik, it turns out that their passport is not worth what they think it is worth. They cannot count on the protection of the Canadian government.

This side of the House says very clearly, so all Canadians can understand, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

Speaking of Canada overseas, the government, over four long years, has steadily diminished Canada's influence and weight overseas. Who in the world can take us seriously as a partner in climate change? We were missing in action at Bali, and we will be missing in action in Copenhagen if the government survives.

Who will actually listen to Canada on the climate change issue? We have had three ministers of the environment, three plans and no action. We have lost all credibility on this issue in the international arena. Who would vote for Canada?

Who would vote for Canada in the Security Council? We have held a seat there almost every decade since the founding of the institution. Who would vote for Canada in the Security Council when the Prime Minister of Canada cannot even bother to show up at the UN General Assembly?

*Business of Supply*

Who in China or India will take seriously Canadian entrepreneurship, Canadian technology, Canadian products if the Prime Minister of Canada cannot even bother to show up to lead trade missions to open those markets to our Canadian entrepreneurs?

These are the kinds of failings that have made us, week after week, month after month, not just over the last year but over four long years, come to the conclusion that we cannot continue to support the government.

Is this a pattern of incompetence or is this a pattern of malice? It is a little of both but there is something else going on that needs to be called by its proper name. There is a deeper design here, a design to permanently weaken the capacity of the federal Government of Canada to help Canadians.

There is, on the opposite side of the House, what could be called the starve-the-beast ideology. We know where that ideology comes from but it is not suited to Canada. It will weaken and eventually it could change Canada beyond recognition.

This party stands against that ideology all the way down. We stand against it because we believe profoundly that if this ideology prevails in this country, it will permanently weaken the tissues that bind our society together, the health care system of which we are so proud, the care for the aged which distinguishes us as a civilized society, and the capacity of our society to provide security in retirement.

The government works on one plan and one plan only, starve the beast, lower expectations of government so far until Canadians cease to have any expectations of the federal government whatsoever. This is an unworthy way to govern this country, and we stand against it.

[*Translation*]

Canadians are not looking for a centralizing government. This party has a vision of a government that works with others; a government that reflects real Canadian values like helping others, and not every person for themselves; values like compassion and competence. Canadians are looking for a government that understands words like compromise, collaboration, compassion and respect. We are waiting in vain for a government that embodies these values.

• (1025)

[*English*]

It is not just the Conservatives' ideology. It is not just their policies. It is the way they conduct politics in this country, what they have done to our politics. All adversaries are enemies. We cannot run Canada that way. This is not a country that we can divide in that way.

All adversaries are enemies; all methods are fair; and all public money is available for partisan purposes. This is unworthy of the political traditions of this country.

When we have a little private moment among our friends at a fundraiser in Sault Ste. Marie, the real story comes out, which is that we want an election so that we can teach Canadians a lesson. That is not how I understand democracy. That is not how this party understands democracy.

We actually receive lessons from the public. We do not give them to the public. We do not use an election to teach left-wing judges a lesson. We do not use elections to teach women who help other women through the cycle of domestic abuse a lesson. We want to use elections to bring Canadians together, to rouse them to a higher purpose.

This kind of approach to politics will weaken and divide our country. It goes beyond that. There is a cynicism about politics which they cultivate through the ways in which they neglect and ignore their own promises. There is an indifference to their own promises, which is astounding.

The Prime Minister of Canada lives in an eternal present where he cannot remember what he promised to Canadians the day before and cannot remember what he will promise the day after. Income trusts: "I can't remember I ever made that promise". Appointment of senators: "I can't remember I ever promised to reform the institution". He cannot remember that he promised there would be no tax increases.

This party has discovered upon looking closely that the Conservatives have hidden a payroll tax of \$13 billion in the weeds, and they do not have the guts to stand up and tell Canadians that is what they are doing.

[*Translation*]

We deserve better. We deserve a compassionate, creative, collaborative government that unites Canadians; one that does not divide them. A government that invites Quebeckers and francophones from across the country to be part of the process; a government that will govern instead of dividing Canadians with partisan games.

[*English*]

We are looking for a government that believes in telling Canadians the truth, a government that believes that growth does not just happen with a market miracle. It requires the focused strategic guidance of a compassionate and creative government.

We believe we are looking for a government that actually thinks it can be a leader, not a follower, in the great drama, the great challenge of global climate change. We are looking for a government that believes in the compassion and creativity of Canadians and wants to stand with them, not against them, and build a great country together. We do not have this government now and we cannot pretend any longer that we do.

Therefore we will stand up in the House and we will support the Canadians who have been abandoned by the government. We will do our job even if it does not.

• (1030)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, order. I know everyone wants to hear what the minister has to say but we cannot if there is too much noise, so I would urge hon. members to restrain themselves and we will hear the Minister of Transport, who has the floor.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. John Baird:** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party gives a speech. It is quite a surprise to us when he says he can no longer pretend to support this government. He has obviously been pretending for some time, because it is some two or three years that the member opposite has been in this House and he has been actively supporting the government.

I would encourage him to look beyond the view from the terrace of his condo in Yorkville and to look at the real needs of people in this country. What Canadians have said very clearly, from coast to coast to coast, north and south, east and west, is that they do not want an early and opportunistic election.

Can the leader of the Liberal Party stand in his place and name one single Canadian who has told him they want a federal election at this time? Name one.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's comments and the personal asides prove my point.

The tone of partisan aggression that serves his country so ill is perfectly represented by the hon. minister's remark.

I meet plenty of Canadians who are absolutely sick and tired of the government and who want a change.

**Hon. John Baird:** Name one.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Bob Rae.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and a question for my hon. colleague, the leader of the Liberal Party. I know he is going to have difficulty hearing with all the heckling surrounding him.

The question on this very serious day is a very serious question that he has chosen to put forward. I looked at the motion. It described non-confidence in the government but did not present a reason. I suppose the speech that we just heard was an attempt to present the reasons and the narrative for this, but it seems my colleague, who has written so many books, still struggles to describe the why and the why now in his narrative on why the country would go to an election now.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Sit down, man.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, my question is very specific and I would ask my colleagues to calm themselves.

It seems to me that there is a specific moment, which he addressed a few times in his speech. I would like a specific commitment or a decision from him, around the issue of climate change, which we can all agree has been and will be a most serious and important consideration for this House and this Parliament over a number of years.

He has admitted in the past to his own government's failings in being able to achieve the goals that his party set forward to meet Canada's international obligations.

As we strive toward Copenhagen and an international agreement at this critical juncture, we have presented a bill to his party. It is now sitting in committee but we have no cooperation whatsoever from his party to move the bill forward which would instruct the government finally in law, with no wiggle room and no ability to backtrack, on the targets. It is a moment for him to stand and commit to this House

that Bill C-311, the Copenhagen bill, a bill of such grave importance as he himself in his speech declared it to be, requires the full and immediate support of his party to be expedited, so that Canada, when it presents itself in Copenhagen in whatever form, has something firm and committed to the world, showing our true commitment, with no more false promises, no more empty solutions, but real commitments and targets.

Will he at least commit today, on such a serious matter, his full support for such an effort?

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I salute the member's avowed commitments on the environment. There have been moments when we have been able to work with his party on the environment, but the plain facts are these.

We have had a government in office for nearly four years. We have had three successive ministers. We have had more plans than we can shake a stick at. We have not even been able to have them costed. Time goes by. Every year the climate change crisis grows more severe and we are dealing with a government that has taken no action for the past four years.

The hon. member asked me at what moment one makes a decision to withdraw confidence. It is a kind of glacial process, a growing accumulation of feeling that we cannot go on, and the failure of the government to respond on the climate change issue is one of the moments that tipped us into a decisive position of full opposition.

I simply throw the challenge back to the hon. member. He seems able to support a government that has done nothing on climate change for three years. So the question really is how he can stand in his place and pretend that the government's performance on climate change is satisfactory when the whole House, with a few exceptions, knows that it is entirely unsatisfactory.

• (1035)

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech of my hon. colleague and tried to discern, really, where Canadians would be with regard to the motion before the House if we were to go into an election at this time.

I really cannot believe what I am hearing, because if he were truly sincere about wanting to do what is in the best interests of this country, why would he vote in recent weeks against the home renovation program, which has been one of the most successful we have seen and is accepted by Canadians right across this country? Why would he vote against that? Why would he vote against EI reform?

The one that really got me was the hypocrisy of his suggestion that we do not have a policy, a program or preparedness for H1N1. I was actually the senior critic of health when the Liberal government handled the SARS crisis in this country. I saw the Liberals missing in action all the way through it, with 44 deaths in the Toronto area alone. Representation should have been made to the World Health Organization by the Liberal government. Instead it was looked after by the now Minister of Industry.

My question to my hon. colleague this. Is he sure that Canadians want an election today?

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, one of the last, most amusing forms of desperation that we witness time and again on the other side of the House is that when the Conservatives are in a hole, they blame the previous Liberal government, which has not been in office for four years. Instead of focusing honestly and addressing the shortcomings of their government in respect of H1N1, they attempt to shift blame into the past.

That is a pattern of evading responsibility that Canadians are thoroughly tired of. That is one of the reasons why we cannot continue to support a government that, instead of offering us a plan, offers us excuses and an alibi.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada said something that really resonated with me, and I sincerely believe that it resonated with many Canadians and Quebeckers.

[English]

He said that for Conservatives, all adversaries are enemies.

[Translation]

He also told us how, for almost four years, this government and all of its members have not had the moral courage to tell Canadians the truth.

When I participated in the EI working group this summer, I personally heard the Conservatives repeat over and over that the Liberals' proposed solution would cost \$4 billion. But the parliamentary budget officer confirmed that the Conservatives were not telling the truth, and that the proposed solution would cost at most \$1 billion.

I would like the Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada to give the House other examples of the Conservatives' lack of moral courage, which prevents them from telling Canadians the truth about what they have or have not done, and about their policies.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to convey my respect for the work done by my hon. colleagues from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and Dartmouth—Cole Harbour on the employment insurance file.

We have worked in good faith, tried to find a solution and tried to make this Parliament work. Given the unprecedented unemployment crisis, we asked ourselves some questions and worked together to come up with some solutions.

Unfortunately, we learned that the government waited eight weeks before it called a single meeting. Then, when we wanted to talk reasonably, they presented us with bogus figures.

Little by little, it became absolutely impossible to work with this government. That is one of the main reasons why it became impossible to make this House work in a constructive way, and that is also one of the reasons why we no longer have confidence in this party to lead the House.

•(1040)

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government

has been in office for almost four years. This is the first time in four years that any opposition party has come forward with a motion of non-confidence. I think that speaks volumes to the quality of government and the leadership of the Prime Minister and his administration.

We are going through a global economic downturn, one that did not start in Canada but has certainly been felt here. In fact, Canada was the last major industrialized country to feel the full effects of this downturn and this government is committed to ensuring that Canada is the first major industrialized country to get out of these hard times.

Canadians in every region of this country from coast to coast to coast, east and west, north and south, on farms and in big cities are concerned. They are concerned about their families. They are concerned about their future and they are concerned about their finances.

My constituents in Ottawa West—Nepean want a government and a Parliament that will focus on the economy, jobs and the concerns of people. They want a government that at the end of the day is willing to put politics aside and work together in the best interests of this country. There is a lot of wisdom there.

I have been involved in politics and government for some 25 years. This past January, I saw something rather extraordinary. I saw two people, the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario, set a new tone and a new leadership of working together to put aside Conservative and Liberal politics and do what is in the national interest. My constituents not only expect that but demand that. The relationship between the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada is quite strong.

I should say at the outset that I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

In my 25 years in politics and government, the relationship between the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario is at its best. It is at a high watermark and that is getting real results for the people and economy of the province of Ontario.

For the first time in a long time, people in Ontario are being treated fairly. When the member for Toronto Centre was the premier of Ontario in an NDP government, when Mike Harris was the leader of a Conservative government and now with Dalton McGuinty as the leader of a Liberal government, we have seen successive premiers call for greater fairness. Representing 38% of the population of this great country, Ontario was having a tough time and deserved 38% of the infrastructure dollars in this country. The leadership of this Prime Minister and this government has finally delivered that.

The two leaders are working well. The two ministers of finance are working well and the two infrastructure ministers are working well. Our officials at both the federal and provincial levels are working well and big things are happening in the province of Ontario with respect to tackling this global economic downturn.



*Business of Supply*

I look at the relationship between the city of Ottawa, my hometown, which has a councillor with a background in the NDP, councillors with backgrounds in the Liberal Party and councillors with backgrounds in the Conservative Party. They are all working constructively with the province and the federal government to get things done. We are all in the same boat. We all have an oar in the water and we are all rowing together. That is what people expect.

In my constituency, we are tackling water quality. The Ottawa River has been the scene of a number of dumpings of what is essentially raw effluent into the river and all three levels of government have come together, making a \$100 million investment to clean up the water. That is something that is a real priority for my constituents and for people throughout the entire region.

• (1045)

We are coming together to build a new convention centre in Ottawa. This \$150 million to \$160 million project is underway now. It has created 300 jobs. When it is completed, we will see a huge boost to the tourism sector, a huge boost to the hospitality sector, a huge boost to hotels and other attractions, to retail and restaurants. That will be a huge job creator and benefit to our community long after this economic downturn is over.

We are seeing investments in the city of Ottawa in public transit, which is reducing congestion, which will help increase the quality of life of everyone in the region. This will lead to better air quality and assist in the fight against climate change. There are two great examples: the realignment of the Baseline station and important work in south Nepean.

This is not just alone happening in Ottawa.

I want to single out the member for Essex, who has provided great leadership not just in his own riding, but in Windsor. Windsor is facing some very difficult economic times. Employment in that region is perhaps the highest in the country. The member for Essex has worked very hard, taking on a regional leadership role. Windsor is not a hot bed of Conservative Party support.

Let us look at what the mayor of Windsor said:

When you compare this (Conservative) government to the previous government, these guys don't want to just talk about it — they want to get it done

That is good news. That is not just the case in Windsor.

Let us look at York region where the mayor of King Township Margaret Black said:

We really appreciate your dedication and hard work in making this dream become a reality for our township. This project is a great example of federal, provincial and municipal governments working together to enhance community life by developing a facility that can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Mayor Black is in fact a Liberal candidate. She has put aside politics and is working with this government, but we do not see that from across the floor in this chamber.

Much has been said about the equality of the distribution of these funds. The member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley spoke earlier. A \$137 million federal investment was made into northwestern British Columbia to put more communities on the grid, remove dirty diesel, so that more clean hydroelectricity could be made available to those

communities, assist in economic development and job creation in the years ahead.

It did not matter who represented that riding. It mattered that there was a need and that a benefit could be made for the long haul. The NDP member for Edmonton—Strathcona said the following: “To tell you the truth, I've noticed that I am attracting a lot of money to my riding”.

In a moment of honesty, one member of the Liberal caucus, the member for Kings—Hants, talking about infrastructure fairness said, “If you actually look at it more broadly, it's more evenly dispersed”. I agree with him.

One Liberal MPP in my home province said:

I'm telling you, I get a lot more from my Conservative seatmate than I got from the Liberal MP who had the seat before...These are not just 'Conservative' ridings, they are 'Liberal' ridings, too.

They are Canadian ridings, and they are Canadians who need a boost for job creation.

*Kamloops News* just today said that the Liberal member for Parkdale—High Park admitted some of his figures are ambiguous”. That is a first step.

We are seeing work in Atlantic Canada. We are working constructively with all the provinces of different political stripes. New Brunswick has a Liberal government. Shawn Graham is a good premier. Listen to what his spokesman said just today in the *Telegraph Journal*:

When it comes to those projects that involve the federal infrastructure stimulus monies, the federal criteria are that the project be shovel-ready and completed within a certain time frame.

That was the criteria we were looking at and geography did not play into it at all. There is an example where the Prime Minister has exercised great leadership working with a Liberal premier in the Maritimes.

Listen to what representatives of municipalities are saying because they are important partners. Basil Stewart, the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, said last June, “Things are starting to move fairly quickly. We're pleased about that”.

Peter Hume, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, said, “I want to congratulate you and your ministers and your officials for working together, working collaboratively to bring much needed investment and economic stimulus to communities in every part of Ontario”.

I had the occasion to visit Sault Ste. Marie, not a government riding again, where the Prime Minister made a \$47 million commitment for a new border plaza, something that is incredibly important.

I have worked with the mayor of Toronto, where we are delivering literally hundreds of millions of dollars of new infrastructure projects to assist economic development and job creation there.

*Business of Supply*

The job is not yet done. Canadians, my constituents in Ottawa West—Nepean, do not just expect but are demanding that we work together, address the economy, address jobs, and get the job done, and not play political games like we are seeing from the leader of the Liberal Party today by wanting to force Canada into an early and opportunistic election.

• (1050)

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am excited by the opportunity to engage in the rhetoric that is emanating from the government side. The minister is talking about two things: first of all, cooperation in the House. That is not something that belongs to the premiers or the mayors or other municipal leaders, but it does belong to members of Parliament in this place.

I dare say that notwithstanding the protestations of the government side, the government has had and has enjoyed the support of members of Parliament from all three parties on the opposition at one time or another. It is important to understand that there has been cooperation here, because the most important question that Canadians have asked as a result of the cooperation of members of Parliament over the course of the last four years is what the government has done with that cooperation.

Here is the answer I would like the minister to address. Over the course of the last 10 months, we have seen an erosion of the finances and the economy of this country under the watch of people who have had the support of members of Parliament who put aside partisanship. We have seen the finances go from a surplus to a deficit situation. That translates into a \$2,000 loan, theft, from the pockets of every single Canadian: every man, woman and child. That is \$2,000. How will the Conservatives recover that in an environment where they are engaging in getting us to go to an election?

**Hon. John Baird:** Mr. Speaker, it was this government, this Prime Minister, this Minister of Finance who in the good times paid down almost \$40 billion in debt. That is about \$3,800 per family.

I have great respect for the member opposite, but in a tough economic time this government came forward with a tough, realistic plan to address the economy. Every single day we have been in the House, the members of the Liberal Party have said, "Spend more. Spend more." It is outrageous for the member opposite to stand in this place and now not agree with the sum of all those requests. Every single time, 79 times, the member opposite and his party stood and supported that economic action plan, and now they are seeking an early and opportunistic election. That is unfortunate. It is not in the interests of Canadians.

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am a sentimental kind of guy, and I want to note that the hon. minister and I were born a week apart in 1969. It was the very same year that the Liberal leader left the country, so it is an interesting sentimental note to bring up today.

But that is not my question. My question has to do with some commentary from around the world. The World Economic Forum recently said that Canada will be one of only two industrialized countries in the world to come out of the global recession more competitive than it was going in.

The French finance minister came out of the G20 finance ministers' meetings the other day and said:

I think... we can be inspired by... the Canadian situation. There were some people who said, 'I want to be Canadian'.

That was a very interesting comment by France's finance minister.

I wonder if the hon. minister could comment on what kind of confidence he has that Canadians will be able to tell the difference between what the Liberal leader is saying and what the rest of the world actually knows to be true.

**Hon. John Baird:** Mr. Speaker, this country is facing some significant challenges. The Prime Minister's leadership is ensuring that while we were the last ones to deal with this global economic downturn, we will be the first to see the good economic times. We, on this side of the House, are all committed to ensuring we come out of these economic difficulties stronger and better able to compete, better able to attract jobs, hope and opportunity.

I agree totally with the member.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister about what he said earlier, regarding the fact that the Conservative government has managed to pay down part of the debt. He boasts a great deal about some of the government's accomplishments, but what he does not mention is who carried the cost.

Why does the minister not mention the cuts made, for example, to literacy programs, the cuts to programs for women's organizations or, of course, the cuts to employment insurance, just to name a few?

Regarding employment insurance, I would remind the minister that when he was in opposition, he was saying the same thing as we are saying now, specifically, that it was wrong to divert funds from employment insurance. Yet the Conservatives continue to divert funds from employment insurance, and Bill C-50 is no different, since it excludes unemployed workers from the program.

[*English*]

**Hon. John Baird:** Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite will not mind me speaking in English, because I want to very precisely respond to his questions, as I always like to do.

The member opposite talked about reductions in spending on literacy programs. What we saw in this country was a significant amount of money being spent to address literacy, but none of it was going to teach people how to read. It was going for conferences, advocacy, websites and other work, but not one dollar was cut that would support a teacher and a student in learning. The member opposite should know that.

When he talks about reductions in programs for women's groups, that was not the case. We reduced bureaucracy so we could continue to support the grants and contributions to women's groups. If we check the budget, the budget for grants and contributions did not change.

*Business of Supply*

Finally on EI, it was this government that came forward with a budget to increase the amount of EI by five weeks. This government has legislation before the House to do even more, and it is the Bloc Québécois that is voting against it.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I am perplexed by the non-confidence motion moved in the House by the official opposition.

Let me get right to the point: our government has the interests of all Canadian families and workers at heart. My colleagues and I are working hard to initiate stimulus projects in all parts of Canada. Unfortunately, the Liberals are only interested in getting in the way by triggering a pointless election that will slow down the implementation of our economic action plan.

In recent months, the Liberals have been obsessed with bringing down the government and triggering an election. Our government has focused on implementing projects throughout the country. While the Liberals have been gunning for a pointless election, we have been working to ensure that Canada emerges from this economic crisis in better shape and stronger than ever.

Our government has invested an unprecedented amount in the economy, infrastructure projects, tourism and culture. The measures implemented mean that Canadians will have more money available when they need it most.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention a number of achievements our government has made in the past year, especially in the Quebec City area, for which I am responsible. The people of Quebec placed their trust in our government, and that is why I proudly defend the investments and efforts we have made since the economic crisis began. We have worked to restore the recognition that the Quebec City area has always deserved. We are listening, and we have taken real, sustainable measures to bolster the regional economy.

By 2011, Quebec will have received \$4.5 billion in infrastructure funding thanks to our economic action plan. This money will go toward highway and water system improvements, among other projects. Jobs have been and will be created. Quebec will be able to proudly meet the challenges of tomorrow.

On September 13, I had the pleasure to announce, with the Province of Quebec, nearly \$303 million in infrastructure stimulus funding for 92 new projects. This funding includes just over \$80 million for a group of 63 Quebec municipalities under the federal-provincial agreement on the joint pipeline renewal program, known as PRECO. It also includes more than \$125 million, with the municipality's contribution, for projects in the Quebec City area.

In addition, in my riding, nearly \$10 million in funding has been announced jointly with the province and the City of Ancienne-Lorette to build a multi-generational training centre in that city.

Our government has invested in large-scale infrastructure projects, which have not only stimulated the local economy, but will help the

Quebec City area maintain its position as a world leader in a number of fields.

The real action we have taken has succeeded in preserving existing jobs and creating new ones, which in turn is helping the economy grow and prosper. Our government's achievements include a number of major investments.

In culture, the marquee tourism events program has granted \$2.7 million to the Quebec City summer festival, which is so successful each year that it is the envy of other cities. The Grand Rire de Québec comedy festival, a local tourist event that is not to be missed, has received nearly \$1 million. The New France festival has received \$500,000. Lastly, the circus school in Limoilou will receive an investment of \$3.2 million.

I am especially proud of our government's investments in research. We recently reached an agreement with GlaxoSmithKline through which the federal government is investing \$40 million in facilities in Sainte Foy. These facilities will become even more effective and future vaccines will be produced there, not only for Quebecers and Canadians, but also for people all over the world.

At Laval University, our government is investing in knowledge infrastructure to the tune of \$19 million, in addition to the \$12 million earmarked for the National Optics Institute. And the CEGEPs in the Quebec City area are getting close to \$4 million.

Our government is a major contributor to the revitalization of the D'Estimauville sector with an \$88 million investment in a federal building construction project.

● (1100)

More than \$4 million has been invested in PRECO for water-related infrastructure in the Quebec City area in order to provide residents with modern infrastructure.

The Quebec City exhibition centre will get more than \$10 million through the Building Canada program.

As far as sports are concerned, the Prime Minister announced at Laval University that three soccer pitches and the astroturf on the football field would be rehabilitated and more seating would be added. He also announced that a new scoreboard would be installed. These investments will allow Laval to proudly welcome the Vanier Cup for the next two years.

These are some examples of the work our government is doing. We are not sitting around twiddling our thumbs. On the contrary, our government has taken additional measures to help Canadians.

For instance, Bill C-50 will provide between 5 and 20 additional weeks of employment insurance benefits to long-tenured workers to help them financially while they look for new work.

We have also proposed a home renovation tax credit to encourage Canadian homeowners to invest in projects that will inject money into their local economy, thereby creating jobs.

*Business of Supply*

In fact, two days ago, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore voted against the measures we proposed to help those most affected by the economic crisis. His only goal was to trigger a needless election.

But our government will not abandon Canadians during a global economic crisis. On the contrary, our government is proposing innovative measures to help those Canadians who just want to work.

Although the Liberals seem to have no interest in the economic recovery, our government has made the economy its priority. All indicators show that we are on the right track.

Canada's economic action plan produces results. It stimulates the economy. It protects and creates jobs.

We are making real progress, but there is more work to be done. Our government needs to stay focused and to continue to implement Canada's economic action plan.

We are creating jobs, we are offering tax breaks, and we are helping people who are experiencing economic difficulties. We are helping Canadians build a better future.

Our government is determined to continue on this path. Doing anything else would be unwise and irresponsible. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberals are trying to force a needless and opportunistic election. They want an election that is not in the best interest of the country. They want an election that would jeopardize Canada's economic recovery.

● (1105)

[English]

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to opportunistic elections, the hon. member does not have to look very far. She just has to talk to the Prime Minister, who broke his own election law last year. In trying to avoid the impact of what was coming in terms of a major recession, he decided to pull the plug on his own government. We do not need any lessons about elections when we see what the government has done.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has repeatedly requested information to look at the spending of the government in terms of the so-called stimulus package. He wants to be able to evaluate it. When are we going to see the books opened up for transparency and accountability so that Canadians can judge for themselves whether or not the money has been spent?

We have heard a round of announcements. Unfortunately, those announcements do not produce jobs. They certainly do not produce the kinds of infrastructure projects that are needed. The government's announcements have been purely partisan and it refuses to even invite members of the opposition and their constituents to attend those announcements. It is not Conservative money, it is public taxpayers' money.

[Translation]

**Hon. Josée Verner:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows very well, and in order to be transparent, we have posted all information regarding spending and projects on the web site. The main objective was to keep Canadians up to date about projects underway.

Allow me to correct the member. Take the project announced in L'Ancienne-Lorette, for instance. I can assure you that the mayor of L'Ancienne-Lorette was very enthusiastic. In fact, his project is ready and will start up in the next few weeks.

[English]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think the minister knows that the NDP members have been very clear about our support for the unemployed and the changes that are needed to the employment insurance system. In fact, we have been supporting the bill and the \$1 billion that was recently put forward.

I would like to ask the minister whether or not her government is prepared to bring forward the very necessary changes, particularly with respect to maternity and paternity benefits for self-employed people.

This is a very serious matter. There are millions of Canadians who are self-employed who are suffering because they cannot take advantage of the EI system. This is very important. Is the government prepared to bring forward this change in recognition of the great need that is out there and the reform that is needed to the EI system to help people who are self-employed?

[Translation]

**Hon. Josée Verner:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, our government is committed to helping all workers, including older and long-tenured workers, and providing training programs. The government is listening. Once again, our objective is to help all workers.

● (1110)

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if she knows—which she surely does—why the government refuses to disclose how it determined that 190,000 unemployed workers are affected by Bill C-50. Furthermore, what calculation method was used to arrive at the figure of \$935 million? To obtain these results, 85% of the unemployed would have to exhaust their benefits whereas we know that only 25% do so.

Could the minister tell us what calculation method was used given that the government still refuses to disclose that information? could she please answer?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister has 30 seconds to respond.

**Hon. Josée Verner:** Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised by the Bloc member's question given that yesterday they were opposed to our employment insurance measures. It is the Bloc's strategy to ask questions, create controversy and then oppose our proposals. We have had many instances of this in recent years. Here is the Bloc paradox once again.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying that 20 minutes is not much time to put the Conservative government on trial for mismanagement. I will have to content myself with summarizing the grievances that we and the entire Quebec nation have against this government. I am certain that when the next election is held, Quebecers will return a majority of Bloc members to this House, as they did in 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004 and 2006.

The motion is simple, and I will read it for the people who are watching: “That this House has lost confidence in the government.” I would add that the Bloc's position is also simple. We no longer have confidence in this Conservative government and therefore will vote in favour of the Liberal Party non-confidence motion. That goes without saying.

How can we have confidence in a government that, less than a year ago, said there would be no recession in Canada, when the whole world was going through a major financial crisis and signs of an economic slowdown were not only on the horizon, but already in evidence to the south of us?

How could Canada have avoided this economic slowdown, knowing that our main trading partner, the United States, which accounts for 85% of our exports, was already going through an economic slowdown? The government tried to deceive the people, but they could not fool Quebecers, which is why, once again, as I mentioned earlier, Quebec rejected the Conservative Party and returned a majority of Bloc Québécois members to this House.

How can we have confidence in a party that, not even a year ago—if memory serves it was on November 24, 2008—tabled an economic statement that should have addressed the economic crisis that was already obvious, not only around the world, but in Canada as well?

The government tabled an economic statement that was actually an ideological statement that sparked a major political crisis in this House. The government attacked democracy by trying to abolish political party financing; it attacked women's rights by trying to prohibit them from going to court on pay equity issues; and it attacked federal employees' bargaining rights.

So how can we have confidence in a government that should have assumed its responsibilities long before November 24? It refused to do so on November 24, 2008, and instead preferred to flex its muscles to try to impress the opposition parties, but instead was caught out at its own game. That forced the Prime Minister to go see the Governor General and ask that the House be prorogued, thereby delaying all the measures that could have been taken to stimulate the economy.

I would remind the House that, long before November 24, the Bloc Québécois had proposed a series of measures with that goal in mind. Furthermore, we reiterated our proposals in April, but this government ignored the Bloc Québécois' proposals every time. As some government members have said several times, the Liberal Party did not contribute many proposals. In fact, they brought none forward, which is a little worrisome for a party that is supposed to be the official opposition.

How can we have confidence in a party whose economic, social, environmental and cultural choices are diametrically opposed to the values and interests of the Quebec nation? How can we have confidence in that party? Of course that is impossible, not only for the Bloc Québécois, but for the entire Quebec nation and all Quebecers, and this is evident in the polls we have seen in recent months.

I would like to come back to exactly how these economic, social, environmental and cultural choices go against the interests of Quebec and against the interests and values of the Quebec nation. I hope I have enough time to go through the entire spectrum of Conservative horrors.

Consider the economic question. I am referring to the so-called economic action plan, or the third report. I would point out that that report is completely confusing and, upon reading it, the reader quickly realizes that the numbers presented do not represent what was really spent. The numbers are promises.

We are being told 90%. I would note that it was 80% in June. It is still somewhat disturbing that the increase has been only 10 percentage points, but again, that absolutely does not reflect the reality of the actual commitments made by the federal government regarding the measures that were announced, which were in fact totally inadequate and inequitable for Quebec.

• (1115)

That also explains why the Bloc Québécois opposed the budget speech.

I am looking at page 127 of this third report to Canadians. At the top, under the heading “Support for Industries”, and more specifically “Support for the auto sector”, in the column “2009-2010 Stimulus Value”, the amount shown is \$9.718 billion. I note that from what we see in the “Stimulus Committed” column, 100% of the funds have been committed in the case of support for the auto sector. Again, that does not mean a lot, but I am reading what the Minister of Finance has presented to us.

Now let us look at forestry, an industry that has been in crisis since 2005, well before the global economic slowdown and the effects it has had on the economy of Quebec and Canada. There is not even any mention of support, which the industry has been calling for since 2005, and which it needs. It needed support yesterday, it needs it today, and if things continue the way they are it will not need it tomorrow because there will no longer be a forestry industry in Quebec. In terms of stimulus value, under “Forestry marketing and innovation”, we see \$70 million for the whole of Canada, or about \$25 million for Quebec, and we see that not all of the money has been committed.

This inequity is the perfect illustration of the fact that the Conservative government is acting in Canada's interests at the expense of Quebec's. We have absolutely nothing against support being given to the auto industry, which is concentrated in Ontario. That industry needs support. What we do not understand is why the government can commit nearly \$10 billion to support the auto industry, which is concentrated in Ontario, and cannot commit an equivalent amount for the forestry industry, which is extremely important to Quebec.

*Business of Supply*

I will give one small illustration. That \$10 billion is going to help save 30,000 jobs in the auto industry, which is concentrated in southern Ontario. Again, we agree with that. The forestry industry in Quebec represents 88,000 jobs, and barely \$28 million has been spent, \$100 million for the whole of Canada. By way of comparison, for each job saved in the auto industry, the Conservative government is prepared to spend \$325,000, or nearly a half-million dollars per job, while for the forestry industry we have barely \$318 per job that could be saved. Again, this support is not only inequitable, it is inadequate and ineffective.

What the forestry industry needs are loan guarantees and loans, because it is currently facing liquidity problems, and a number of companies will not survive the crisis if the Conservative government does not wake up and release funds providing some liquidity for this industry. This is one illustration of the fact that the Conservatives have abandoned Quebec. I point out once again that we have no problem with the assistance given the Ontario sector.

The Bloc has put forward proposals. The industry too has submitted proposals to the government, as have the unions and municipal representatives. Here are a few examples. A proposal was made to establish a credit facility to allow forestry companies to obtain loans and loan guarantees so they might get the funding they need to deal with the crisis. As I mentioned, a number have gone bankrupt, such as AbitibiBowater, or are verging on bankruptcy, such as Tembec. A refundable tax credit for investment was proposed to help businesses modernize. There is a tax credit for research and development already, but it is not refundable. When there are no profits, there is no benefit from such a measure. If the credit were refundable, a company such as Tembec, which invests nearly \$80 million in research and development annually, could be refunded \$80 million on its investment through a tax credit.

I would like to point out that, each time I hear the Conservative MPs from Quebec, I feel for them, but I feel more for the people who put their trust in them. They say they have lowered taxes on profits. That is of no help to the sectors in difficulty. When there are no profits, there are no taxes to be paid on profits. So this is what the Conservative government has put in place—reductions in taxes that have benefited primarily the oil companies, the companies operating in the tar sands. We have not been fooled by what has gone on in the past months and years.

We also sought \$50 million to fund research on biofuels from forestry waste. The aim is to reduce Quebec's dependence on petroleum.

• (1120)

This is an industrial strategy the Bloc formulated nearly two years ago now. We also introduced a bill, which, just as the Government of Quebec wants to do—a coalition has been established in Quebec—aims to promote the use of wood in the construction or renovation of public buildings. Finally, we called for the establishment of a real carbon exchange in Montreal—there is one, as we know—but without absolute reduction targets, without 1990 as the reference year and without a territorial approach, the exchange will never get off the ground.

More than just the forestry industry in Quebec has been ignored by the Conservative government. There is also the aerospace

industry, which is extremely important and an industry of the future for Quebec. This very morning, we learned, unfortunately, that Pratt & Whitney will be laying off 410 people. This illustrates the difficulties in this sector. Bombardier too had to lay employees off. The government totally ignored the problems of the aerospace sector, as if they did not exist. They probably do not exist in the minds of the Conservatives, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance because this sector is concentrated in the greater Montreal area. If it exists in Quebec, it must not really exist in the rest of Canada.

I believe that, because we pay taxes to Ottawa, we are entitled to industrial policies that meet the needs of our sectors of the future, such as aerospace. The government should immediately develop a real aerospace policy. The Bloc Québécois will continue to insist on this. My colleagues, and especially the hon. members for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher and Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, will continue to demand an industrial policy on aerospace.

There were also the research cuts, which did a lot of harm to Quebec. We saw it once again this morning. There was an announcement that the Minister of State (Science and Technology) had tried to intervene and induce a scientific research council not to support a conference because the minister and the government thought it did not have the right ideology.

I also remember the very restrictive program they instituted in the last budget for business research grants. Later I will read a few excerpts from a column by Alain Dubuc, who is far from being a sovereigntist or progressive, but who still realizes we have a government that is totally regressive in the area of research and development. These cuts to research and development and these ideological approaches have done great harm to a number of research sectors in Quebec. I am thinking, for example, of Abitibi—Témiscamingue or the Université du Québec à Rimouski, which had to abandon its research programs.

This region also suffered cuts to the *Coriolis II*, the only university oceanographic research ship in Rimouski. I might add in passing that this Conservative government has virtually no regard for the Lower St. Lawrence region. It has no regard as well for its own members and ministers. We even had cuts to the Mont-Mégantic Observatory, in the riding of the Minister of Public Works, who found out about them in the newspapers. That goes to show how much influence he has in his caucus.

The Conservative government has been negligent and unfair in such future sectors as research, aeronautics and other sectors that are important for the regions of Quebec, such as the forestry sector, including pulp and paper. The government deserves to be punished.

*Business of Supply*

In regard to the research issue, Alain Dubuc wrote the following in *La Presse*, “It is so stupid I could laugh. It is as if the [Conservative] government were showing off a caricature of itself. Unfortunately, though, it is very serious. It is the same logic, the same obscurantism, the same inability to understand how advanced societies develop that led it to cut the grants to artists for international tours”. That was Alain Dubuc writing in *La Presse*, a paper that is far from sovereigntist, who said this because it is just common sense.

I have not had a chance to say this yet, but I want to point out that Canada is lagging behind in research and development.

In 2006, Canada spent 1.06% on research and development. The OECD average was 1.56%. We were among the lowest-ranking G8 and G7 countries, behind France, the United States, Japan, Germany and Great Britain. We should not be neglecting this sector. We are already behind. We are the least advanced of all western economies, and this government is making things even worse.

Quebec is not satisfied with these economic choices. Quebec's future economic development is being jeopardized.

• (1125)

There are two other economic issues I want to talk about: public finances and the economy and the environment. Once again, the Conservative government's choices have compromised Quebec's future.

With respect to public finances, the fiscal imbalance still has not been resolved. People in Quebec—including Jean Charest's government, which is anything but sovereigntist—are all too aware of this. The Parti Québécois, the ADQ and people in the business community are aware of it too. Everybody knows that even though the health transfers have come through, we are a long way from eliminating the fiscal imbalance.

Among other things, Quebec is still waiting for \$850 million in post-secondary education transfers just to bring funding levels back to where they were in 1994-95 before Paul Martin unilaterally slashed transfers for post-secondary education and in a number of other sectors.

But it is not enough just to increase transfer payments. We would like that and we supported a Conservative government budget in the past because it included a significant transfer to Quebec. However, to truly resolve the fiscal imbalance we need to negotiate the transfer of a portion of the federal tax base to the Government of Quebec, which was done under Pearson and even in the 1970s when René Lévesque was Premier of Quebec.

There are other problems besides the fiscal imbalance. There is a series of disputes between Ottawa and Quebec. Allow me to name a few because they will make anyone's hair stand on end. The Government of Quebec is looking for money. It is waiting for its due. I am talking about at least \$8 billion. There is the \$2.6 billion for harmonizing taxes. We know that Quebec was the first jurisdiction to harmonize its sales tax with the GST, as the federal government of the day, under Mr. Mulroney, asked us to do. Our taxes have been harmonized since 1992. We have never been compensated. That represents \$2.6 billion. Ontario will be compensated and so will British Columbia, just like the Atlantic provinces were before them.

In the economic statement, the Minister of Finance told us that all the other provinces that harmonize their sales tax with the GST will be compensated—except Quebec.

There is the issue of equalization, of course. The Conservative government's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance went back on their promise. Equalization has been capped, which means that Quebec loses out on \$1.25 billion a year.

There is the issue of funding for infrastructure, namely \$1.3 billion. There is social assistance. By the way, this issue was not mentioned much in the last budget, but we are mentioning it today. A certain number of criteria were changed for transfer payments related to social assistance, which leaves Quebec with a \$600 million shortfall. Half a billion dollars is not insignificant in the current economic climate. There is also the matter of \$60 million for health transfers and the \$850 million I mentioned earlier for post-secondary education.

There is \$421 million, dating back to the ice storm in the mid-1990s. That is still unresolved. And that was during the time of the Liberals, who are no better than the Conservatives. I must add \$416 million for the Pacte pour l'emploi Plus and \$127 million for the income stabilization program, which also dates back to the 1990s when the Liberals were in power. Add to that \$284 million for the Canada assistance plan, \$53 million for improving northern airports, and \$220 million for the CHUM and Sainte-Justine hospitals.

These claims add up to more than \$8 billion, and they would be resolved if the federal government respected Quebec. If it were open to negotiating in good faith with Quebec. If it led by example with its so-called open federalism.

That is not the case. The government is being petty, as evidenced yesterday in the Prime Minister's response, when he said that Quebec would be compensated if it did exactly what the others had done and let the federal government collect the QST, even though since 1992, Quebec has collected not only the QST, but also the federal GST.

As I said, I am running out of time. I would have liked to discuss a very important topic, but I am sure that the member for Chambly—Borduas will ask a question about employment insurance, which is a thorn in the side of the Conservative government. There is also the issue of the government's completely outdated notions about the environment.

• (1130)

If I had the unanimous consent of the House, I could take five more minutes to cover these topics and to finish my comments about the Conservative government and its mismanagement. Could you seek the consent of the House? If not, I will conclude.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member for Joliette to speak for five more minutes?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is no consent.

*Business of Supply*

Unfortunately, the hon. member's time has expired. We will now move on to questions and comments. The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, later today, something very unusual and unexpected is going to happen: the NDP will give the Conservatives a vote of confidence. It is especially worrisome that the reason for this vote of confidence in the Conservatives is the vote on Bill C-50, an employment insurance measure.

I think we are missing some information here. The government systematically refuses to explain to us its method of calculation, how it came up with the results described earlier. We asked government officials, but were refused. They were unable to tell us how they calculated the numbers that appear in Bill C-50. We asked the ministers for answers. Again this morning, we asked the minister from Quebec City, and again we were refused. The NDP claims that Bill C-50 will give \$1 billion to employment insurance.

I would like to hear the comments of my colleague, the hon. member for Joliette and Bloc Québécois House leader, whom I also congratulate on his speech. Could he explain to us how that result could have been reached, considering the number of people who are coming to the end of their employment insurance benefit period? I would like to hear his comments on this. It would be very informative for those watching us today.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, because it is a crucial issue.

I find it absolutely deplorable that the New Democratic Party, which claims to be a party that looks after the interests of workers and the unemployed, would buy the government's argument, because it just does not hold up. First, we must remember that the criteria to qualify for these 5 to 20 additional weeks of benefits are extremely tight as regards the benefits received in previous years. This means that a seasonal worker, in a sector where people are laid off intermittently, would not qualify. Moreover, a worker must have paid EI premiums for a certain period of time. The first thing that is unacceptable in Bill C-50, which, unfortunately, the NDP is supporting, is that it creates two classes of contributors and claimants. We have the good ones, namely those who have worked for a long time—good for them—and who have not had to rely on the EI fund. Then we have the bad ones, who have paid premiums but who, unfortunately, have had to rely on the EI program too frequently. Again, Bill C-50 should be defeated for that reason alone.

But there is more. The government is telling us that 190,000 workers will benefit from these measures if they lose their jobs. That is impossible and I can explain why very quickly. We currently have 1.6 million unemployed people in Canada. Half of them, that is 800,000, are entitled to benefits. The others do not qualify because they do not meet the eligibility criteria. So, roughly 800,000 people are getting benefits. Out of that number, 200,000, or 25%, are coming to the end of their benefits. This means that between 85% and 90% of these 200,000 people would be entitled to extended benefits. Given the criteria that are set out in Bill C-50, that is impossible. So, what the government is saying, and what the NDP is supporting, is just smoke and mirrors: it is simply not true.

● (1135)

**Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, because he did not get the unanimous consent of the House, my colleague could not finish his brilliant presentation. He barely had time to mention one extremely important issue, namely, the environment.

We are well aware that the environment is not at all a priority for the Conservatives. Over the years, our country has become the caboose of the international community, when it comes to the environment. We are among the G20 countries that invest the least in that sector. We recently learned that only a very small amount of the money earmarked for renewable energies has actually been spent. It is obvious that the Conservative government has no intention to innovate in that area, it has no intention to invest in clean and renewable energies. I find it extremely unfortunate, because we in Quebec decided a long time ago to go green and to act accordingly. We have resources that allow us to develop renewable energies. Earlier, my colleague told us that the Lower St. Lawrence region had been abandoned. Without a carbon exchange, the town of Rivière-du-Loup is losing close to \$1 million annually. As we can see, the Conservatives still do not understand that the environment and the economy easily can be—and must be—promoted together.

I wonder if our House leader could elaborate on this.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Repentigny, who comes from the beautiful Lanaudière region, as I do, for his question.

The approach taken by the Conservatives and the Prime Minister is completely outmoded. Today, there is not one advanced economy left that sets the economy up against the environment. That is what the Conservatives are doing, although green measures are extremely important in all of the current recovery plans, whether in the United States or Europe. This is understandable when we see that while in the case of the Liberals, decisions are made in Toronto, as the member for Bourassa said at the beginning of the week, in the case of the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister, decisions are made in Calgary. The economic development strategy is designed to meet the needs of the oil industry and the oil sands companies, and not to meet the needs of industry, of the economy of the future.

It is also not surprising when we consider that this Prime Minister reneged on Canada's signature on the Kyoto protocol, that he reneged on the vote held in this House to ratify the Kyoto protocol, and that he described that protocol as a "socialist plot".

It is also easy to explain when we consider that the Prime Minister preferred to have coffee and a doughnut at Tim Hortons, probably a nice chocolate glazed, rather than attend the UN's extraordinary session on climate. It is extremely symptomatic.

Again, this environmental choice, a choice in the interests of the oil industry, is contrary to the interests of Quebec, because Quebec does not produce oil. Every time we spend a cent on oil, that money leaves Quebec. This explains a large part of our trade deficit with the rest of Canada and the world. As Quebecers, it is in our interests to reduce our dependency on oil. That is very much not the approach taken by the Conservative government. And that is one reason why it must be banished from this place.



*Business of Supply*

•(1140)

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Joliette. We know he is an experienced economist. If the Conservative government had bothered to consult him about the economic crisis that was developing during the last election campaign, we would not be here today. The crisis was in fact hitting hard in the United States, Europe and virtually the entire world. Only in Canada did the government put on its rose-coloured glasses to persuade the public, in the middle of an election campaign, that we would be immune to the crisis.

A moment ago, my colleague referred to the ideological statement that came after the election campaign, in which this visionless government included no measures to combat the economic crisis. After that, it was politics as usual, with measures that addressed only very specific problems, like auto workers in Ontario. Again, I want this to be very clear: we are not opposed to providing assistance for auto workers in Ontario.

But how is it that this government has acted so inequitably toward workers in the manufacturing and forestry industries in Quebec, while it has been so generous to Ontario workers?

It is not just the Conservative government that has no vision, there is also the party that claims to want to replace it and that is saying today it no longer has confidence in this government, with good reason, by the way. That being said, the Liberal Party of Canada also has no vision, since it has not proposed any kind of measure to combat the effects of the economic crisis, while the Bloc Québécois has made serious proposals.

I would like my colleague to give us a few examples of what could be done to help Quebeckers who are dealing with this economic crisis, the crisis whose existence the Conservative government was still denying not so long ago.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska for his question. I think he raised a point that is worth elaborating on.

The Liberals and the Conservatives share a similar approach, even though they use different words. In terms of the economy, when did the Liberals ever stand up on behalf of the forestry industry? We moved a motion in the House one opposition day, but they voted against it. In terms of the environment, did the Liberal government, which allowed greenhouse gases to increase by 22% until 2006, do any better than the Conservatives? No. In terms of the Quebec nation, are the Liberals doing any better than the Conservatives? They deny Quebeckers working for employers under federal jurisdiction the right to work in French. They will support increasing political representation for the west, which will undermine representation of the Quebec nation in the House. In other words, both of these Canadian parties are fundamentally opposed to Quebec's interests and values.

[*English*]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

It is not every day that we have a motion of confidence in the House, so it obviously is a very serious matter. It is a matter that New

Democrats take very seriously. We have had serious debate not only within our caucus but with our constituents. To put forward a motion that the House has lost confidence in the government is something that needs to be looked at very carefully.

If we look at the record of what has happened since the Conservative government was elected in 2006, it will show very clearly that the NDP has been the toughest critics of the Conservative government and its policies, right from day one.

In fact, we never had confidence in the government. We have been very clear that the overall direction it has taken on the economy, social programs, its attacks on workers, women, pay equity and the billions it has given away in corporate tax cuts have been disastrous courses of action. We have been very tough on the government. I think many Canadians have seen the New Democrats as the official opposition, that we were the ones who took on the direction of the government and stated how wrong it was.

While being the toughest critics of the government, we have also always done our very best to make this minority Parliament work. Again, if we look at the record, it will show a number of bills have come forward that have passed the House, that have gained majority support and the actions that have taken place in committees and the studies that have been undertaken have come from New Democrats.

We have all the statistics to show the number of bills we have put forward, whether it is Bill C-311, the climate change accountability bill, or Bill C-304 for a national housing strategy, which historically passed second reading last night. It only took 12 years to get back from the disastrous course that the Liberals took in the 1990s when they trashed and eliminated the great housing programs that Canada had. Look at the EI bills, some of which are now in committee, or our motion that was passed on the need to protect our seniors.

We feel very good about our work and our record in being very tough critics of the government and the direction it has taken. At the same time, we make every effort, more than 100%, to make this Parliament work for Canadians, to get things done. That is what people sent us here to do.

That is a really important point to make today. For two years the official opposition propped up the Conservatives and gave a complete green light to their agenda, whether it was those billions in corporate tax cuts, or the attacks on pay equity and women, or the attacks on the unemployed and on workers' rights. We know there were 79 substantive confidence votes they let slide.

The big question today, which is left hanging in the air, is what did they get for that? We are here now at this point with a confidence motion. After all of that record, what did the Liberals get for supporting the measures of the direction of the government for two years? We have seen the report cards, the government was put on probation, but what did the official opposition actually get?

*Business of Supply*

The Liberals claimed, over and over again, that EI was their top priority. How many times did we hear this in the House? We know that in the summer they walked away from that, and they got nothing for it. All of sudden, they have decided their first priority is an election.

Clearly the New Democrats are more interested in helping the unemployed than we are in provoking an early election that people do not want. That is a very important consideration.

We talk to our constituents. We go back and we find out what people think. We ask if they think this is the right time for an election. People have clearly said that this is not a good time for an election. We have had four elections in five years. People want to see this Parliament work.

I am very proud of the New Democrats. When we came back on September 14 and the Liberals had taken the disastrous course of saying that it would an election at any cost, that they would pull the plug, we saw that as an opportunity to tell the government if it did not want an election, it had to reach out and put something on the table to make it clear that it was willing to work with the opposition parties to produce the things that Canadians needed.

• (1145)

The NDP are pleased to see that, finally, the Conservative government put \$1 billion on the table for the EI bill. That just passed second reading in the House and it has now gone to committee. It will be studied there and come back to the House, at which time we will have a final vote. We saw that as a positive first step.

The NDP leader has been very clear with the Conservative government that the NDP does not support its overall direction and we will continue to be the toughest critic on any anti-people measures it takes. If it slams workers or cuts programs, we will continue to be its critic. However, we are prepared to look at individual proposals it brings forward. In fact, we have been very transparent about what the priorities are.

There have been no back room negotiations or deals. It has been the NDP day after day in the House that has put forward political priorities, whether it is reforming the EI system, providing help for pensioners, ensuring that consumers have protection, asking the government to come clean with its record on the HST and stop trying to duck the issue or coming clean with the people of B.C. and tell us when the negotiations started. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives are now trying to run for cover on that one.

We have been very clear that the government needs to be prepared to bring forward other initiatives around EI. The question I raised earlier today with the government was whether it was now prepared to help self-employed workers. This is a very critical question.

I do not know about other members, but when I talk to folks in Vancouver East, the biggest response is from self-employed people who are really hurting because they have no cushion on which to fall. They have no protection during this recession. It is very tough for people who are self-employed, who at one time were doing quite well but in the recession are finding they cannot get the consulting work or contracts. Small businesses are going under, as well as people who are self-employed in other ways. Again, is it prepared to

bring forward further changes to the EI system that will help self-employed workers?

New Democrats believe this is a constructive course of action. This is where we need to focus attention instead of playing these political games, like the Liberals now saying it is their way or it is an election.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition state earlier today in his speech, "We use elections to bring people together". I thought that was very ironic. An election is about accountability for sure, but it is also about ensuring that people do not become weary from dealing with elections and being concerned everyday with what is going on in a recession that it divides people and further turns people off the political system. This is what the leader of the official opposition is now doing.

This election is not about bringing people together. From the Liberal point of view, this election is about serving its own political agenda. We need to call it that and be very clear.

New Democrats are prepared to work in the House and to do it in a genuine way and in good faith. We will take on the government. We will be critical of its policies, but we also want to ensure nothing stands in the way of getting the \$1 billion of assistance to people who need it. We think that is a key priority. We want to ensure other measures are brought forward that will help people. That is the priority right now in this recession.

I am glad we are having this debate because it brings everything into the open. New Democrats are very clear that the priority is trying to make Parliament work. As long as that measure exists, we will certainly support it.

We hope other proposals will put on the table by the government that will help the unemployed, seniors and consumers deal with the recession they are facing every day. That is what is really important to people.

• (1150)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoy listening to the words of my colleague, who is always clear. In a sense she is interpreting what is going on in the House today for her constituents and for Canadians in general who are wondering why the Liberals have decided now to do this.

I have a question that is specific to the British Columbia context, although it has ramifications across the country.

The first issue is the so-called harmonized sales tax, which is anything but harmonized and will bring no harmony to anyone. It is a tax hike in many areas for consumers and a rip-off from those companies who are paying right now. The second issue is the so-called softwood lumber deal, or the rip-off of the Canadian softwood lumber industry.

On both of those fronts, bills are very likely going to come forward from the government.

*Business of Supply*

Canada is going to have to slap a \$70 million tariff on the softwood lumber industry, which it can little afford. Thousands of jobs have been lost in the industry. This is another tax self-imposed by the government, which will go into general revenue and by law will not be returned back to lumber producers. That has to come in the form of a bill to this place.

The Liberals supported the softwood lumber sell-out all the way through its stages. They first came up with the terrible idea and then the Conservatives followed. Members may remember David Emerson flipping sides by keeping that mandate and he pushed it all the way through.

The Liberals supported the softwood lumber deal, but now they say that when the bill to rip-off lumber companies comes forward, they will vote against the very thing in which they believed.

It is the same with respect to the HST, which I think the Liberals support. They have twisted themselves into a pretzel, saying they will vote against the HST. Perhaps the member for Wascana could make it clear because nobody can truly understand. However, they support the HST but will vote against it if the government brings it forward.

The Liberals have made no sense strategically and therefore cannot maintain a narrative at all in this—

• (1155)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Vancouver East.

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has raised some of the key questions that have been before Parliament and will probably come back in a legislative form.

With respect to the HST, since we came back and learned about the deal between B.C. and the federal government, we have not heard one question from the Liberals on this. The NDP has consistently raised this question, trying to find out when the negotiations began with the federal government and the B.C. government. People in B.C. would like to know whether there were discussions and, as we suspect, whether they were during or prior to the provincial election that was called.

The member is perceptive in outlining the very strange and twisted record of the official opposition, as those members try to manoeuvre around what their position has been.

When the Liberals voted 79 times to support the Conservatives on the budgets in particular, the HST was there. I do not remember hearing a peep out of Liberal members at that time, not even the ones from B.C. or from Ontario, where we now know this deal is under way.

It is the same with softwood lumber. Anybody who has followed the softwood lumber debate and the agreement that was made, knows the NDP members fought that tooth and nail the whole way.

Unfortunately, the official opposition has done this manoeuvring. The Liberals are really dealing with a self-interested, partisan question around the election as opposed to the priorities of Canadians and what we need to work on in the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the New Democrats and the member who just spoke, the New Democratic Party critic.

Considering everything the Conservatives have done or not done, how can she, in her comments and her way of seeing things, vote against this motion? The question is whether the House still has confidence in the government. Given everything that has happened until now and the New Democratic Party's statements, the answer is self-evident. The question is simple: does she have confidence in the current Conservative government?

[*English*]

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, in my earlier remarks I said quite clearly that New Democrats actually never had confidence in the government from day one and we have been its strongest critics on many of the policies it has brought forward.

However, we have also done our very best to make this Parliament work. We think it is most important at this particular time, when people overwhelmingly do not want an election, to say to the Conservatives that if they are prepared to bring something forward that will actually help the unemployed, and we do have the EI bill before committee, we are prepared to consider looking at supporting the bill, and that is what we are doing.

We will continue to look at that bill, and we will not stand in the way of it getting through.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am always proud to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay. When I stand in the chamber I am always reminded, whatever the form of debate, that this is the place where the great moments in Canadian history have happened. With respect to the defining debates of our generation, whether it was the debate on capital punishment, and even the debate on the extension of the mission in Kandahar, this is where we come together to debate. That being said, not all the debates are great. Some of them are rather mundane. Some of them are fractious. Parliament and democracy is a messy business, but this is where we come to discuss the various aspects of bringing this country forward.

I cannot think of a moment in recent political history where we have had a motion brought forth by the Liberal Party, or any party, that is using the pretext of creating a parliamentary crisis to set up a sideshow to divert citizens' attention from the rot and collapse of what is happening within the Liberal Party. The party looks like a deflated balloon. The Liberals are telling us that this is the moment when they will come forward, and they have brought forth nine lousy words: to bring down a government and force an election. There is no vision and no plan whatsoever.

*Business of Supply*

Let us get to the point of what this is about. We can talk about the problems of the Conservative government any day; the New Democrats have done that consistently. We have never had confidence in the government, because when they brought forth motions under the guise of stimulus that stripped environmental protection on riverways, we opposed that. We opposed the Conservatives when they used the economic stimulus to strip the rights of women workers to get pay equity. We opposed them when they tried to use the economic stimulus as a cover to gut Kyoto.

However, our friends in the Liberal Party never used their position in opposition to push back or demand changes, because they have a fundamentally different view on power. We could perhaps call it the hyena rule of politics, where they would lie in the long grass waiting for government to stumble and then come in and pick up the spoils. They did not see their role in opposition as pushing back, of proposing, of demanding, alternatives.

That is what we in the New Democratic Party have done. We have pushed the government. We have opposed it. We have also said to bring forward motions in this minority context so something can happen. If that happened, then we have achieved our role as opposition.

We now have a \$1 billion on the table to help the unemployed. Will it help everyone? No. We understand clearly in politics that we move incrementally to bring forward progressive change. However, the Liberals are not concerned about the \$1 billion for the unemployed. They have never been interested in that. It has always been about getting back to power.

We are seeing a sideshow today, where the Liberals are trying to divert attention from the media, from the spectacle going on in their riding associations, their nomination battles and their backstabbing. They are trying to precipitate a parliamentary crisis.

That would not be so bad if they were serious. It reminds me of when I was a child and my granny would take us to see the wrestling. All the ten-year-old boys would be up there shouting and threatening to take Killer Kowalski in a fight. All it would take was for the Killer to look up and glare at us and we would all go running to our seats. We know that the Liberal Party is terrified of the polls. The member for York West said that 99% of the Liberals do not want an election. I am looking at their ranks. They do not have 99 members. That means that perhaps even the leader is saying, "yes, yes, yes", but his knees and legs are saying, "no, no, no".

This is an absurd spectacle, and it has to be framed this way. This party has to grow up and realize that if it is to be a 21st century party involved in participatory democracy, then the members have to start coming forward with some progressive, credible ideas that are based on the principles of parliamentary democracy.

Let us look at this farce that is taking place within the Liberal Party right now. It could be a reality TV show; it could perhaps be a tawdry Graham Greene novel. We have the butler, the would-be contender in Outremont, the butler who worked for the power corporation, the butler who was seen as a threat to the Quebec lieutenant, and the Quebec lieutenant who worked for the Count. But then there was the man in the shadows from Toronto Centre, who is also tied to a power corporation and of course tied to the puppet

master, the former prime minister. We have the butler, the Quebec lieutenant, the man in the shadows and the Count.

● (1200)

It reads like some kind of bizarre Graham Greene novel, but what it speaks about is that not one of these players in this Outremont farce ever said that the riding association should be making the decision.

When a party loses power, it has to go back to its grassroots. It has to get revitalized. It has to come back for new ideas. People waited. They waited through five Liberal leaders in five years for these new ideas.

We may say what we want about the former Liberal leader, but he was a man who came to this House and said where he stood. We could disagree with him, but he stood on principles and he did his job. The present Liberal leader has presented us with no vision except that he believes he is fundamentally entitled to power.

We have come to this non-confidence motion: nine measly words. We have waited for this vision. Where is this vision? We have waited for an alternative to the gang of Conservatives, but there is none. There is just a sense of entitlement. They say, "Here is our list. We want power back." There has been no attempt from this party, at any point, to come forward with a vision other than "trust us". If there were a vision, we could debate it.

I personally think that the present Liberal leader is profoundly out of touch with average Canadians in his defence of torture, his flag-waving on the Iraq war and the very scurrilous comments he has made in the last few years about Canada's tradition of peacekeeping. He thought we took the easy way out when we were building bridges and schools overseas. That is profoundly out of touch with Canadian values.

I would like the Liberal leader to bring his vision so we could debate it in the House. Perhaps there is another way, but we have seen none of that.

We come back to the motion of today. The government has been on the wrong track for some time. We have tried to push back, but we have had a party in opposition that has sat back and allowed, time after time, the Conservatives to push through key elements of their agenda that progressive Canadians are fundamentally opposed to. We finally now have them at the table saying that they will bring forward some motions. It is not great. It is not the end of the world. It is not going to solve everything, but we finally have them at the table saying they will do something.

The Liberals are saying, "We do not want to talk about that. We want to talk about coming back to power." We have not seen any credible position or vision from this party. Like the rest of Canadians, we are going to have to sit back and watch *Tout le monde en parle* to see the next steps in the reality TV show that has become the Liberal Party.

If a leader has a vision, he invigorates his party members and they stand behind him. They do not stab each other in public and try to create regional battles, pitting one city against another. That is not a party that is ready for power.

*Business of Supply*

I would ask my hon. colleagues in the Liberal Party to calm their leader down, to explain that in Canada one has to go with something other than a sense of entitlement. Perhaps we need to say that this party needs to spend a little more time in the political wilderness. It needs to reinvigorate itself a little more, and it needs to spend more time understanding that in the 21st century its grassroots count, new ideas count, that it is not simply a letter of entitlement that allows it to walk in and assume power.

I do not think anybody is in the media gallery today watching this spectacle of the Liberal Party clashing its paper swords. I do not think anybody up front is watching it. They are waiting for us to get back to business, because the business at hand is very serious. We are in the worst economic crisis in a generation. We are on the verge of perhaps the most serious flu pandemic in 20 or 30 years. We are before Copenhagen with a government with no plan to deal with the serious issues of climate change.

Our role as opposition is so important. It is to propose and push the government to action. I would like to see our colleagues in the Liberal Party work with us on how we take the government and make it responsive to the Canadian people. However, there has to be something more to it than suddenly saying to the Canadian people, "We want power. We want it now. We are not going to provide you with any reason of why we want power other than the fact that we are the Liberals."

That is why they got tossed out in the first place, and that is why their motion is seen as a farce today.

● (1205)

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, while there were some things in the hon. member's speech that I would disagree with; I want to focus on some of the things I do agree with. We are in a minority Parliament in a fairly serious global economic turndown right now. In this minority parliament the government has put forward legislation that we think is in the interests of the country. We hope that the three opposition parties will make decisions based on principle as to whether they agree with that.

On the EI bill we have put forward, the NDP has made a decision to support that one bill on principle. What we have seen from the Liberal Party is a decision not to make decisions based on principle at all. Instead it has made a decision that it is going to oppose everything on the basis that it simply wants an election, that what Canadians decided a year ago in an election is not good enough, that Canadians got it wrong and the Liberals know what is right.

There is a quote that the Liberal leader actually put in writing in *The New York Times* about two years ago. He said:

—politics is theatre. It is part of the job to pretend to have emotions that you do not actually feel.

I thought about that quote as I was listening to his speech today. I want to know from the hon. member if he agrees that politics is simply theatre and that we need to pretend, as the Liberal leader says, to have—

● (1210)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, the Liberal leader said it is like theatre. The member's party is more like a reality TV show these days. There are days I come into the House and feel it has become like a grade nine cafeteria. I have heard Liberals jokingly say, because they are not really serious about it, "Oh, what's the matter? Is the NDP afraid?" Afraid of what?

There is only one thing I am afraid of, and that is going to residents in places like Smooth Rock Falls and Cochrane, where the mills have shut down, and saying that I had the opportunity to help them get that extra amount of EI to get through the winter and not lose their homes and I decided we were not going to help them because the Count from the United States was entitled to take power in Canada and they would have to wait until he gets power. That is the only thing I would be afraid of saying to a constituent.

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am taken by the appearance of principle and seriousness by the member. For those of us who were here in 2006, and perhaps he was not here, and maybe there is a disconnect, some of the very dear principles that his party held with respect to early childhood education, the cities agenda, the housing strategy, public transportation, the dedicated tax for gas, the Kelowna accord with aboriginal people, and post-secondary education in the knowledge economy were all part of the principled budget put forward by the Liberals. The NDP saw there was an opportunity to play that act out in its theatre and vote against the government, which came down and those principles were lost.

What principles are driving the support for the government when in the last vote on employment insurance it was not serving the very people he just talked about? If there is any reason, the reasons are before us. How can he explain that absolute hypocrisy?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has one minute to respond.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, that is so unfair.

To respond, we saw a party that was rife with corruption, that for 13 years did nothing to help the first nations communities, stripped EI, stripped the whole plan for a national housing program, and when the Liberals were on their deathbed, they wrapped all these promises into a giant Liberal pinata. They smashed that pinata just before their death, and they threw these promises across Canada and said, "We delivered." They delivered nothing, and that is why the Canadian people threw them out. Their big problem is that they want to blame us. Canadians were fed up with their sense of entitlement, and the Canadian public threw them out.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there are many reasons why we on this side of the House have lost confidence in the Conservative government. Some of those reasons were outlined earlier today in the speech by the Leader of the Opposition. Others will be advanced by my colleagues through the day. In that regard, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

*Business of Supply*

For my part I want to focus specifically on the economy, on the government's ongoing economic incompetence and why it simply cannot be trusted. On the Conservative government's watch, nearly half a million full-time Canadian jobs have disappeared. Now, this country is on its way to a multi-year, multi-billion dollar string of Conservative deficits, the biggest in Canadian history. It all goes to questions of competence and trust or the lack thereof.

The Conservatives brought Canada into deficit quite unnecessarily, not because of but before any recession began. When the Liberals turned over the reigns of power in February 2006, Canada's fiscal position was the best since Confederation and at the very top of the G8 group of world leading countries. Our economy had thrived through a decade of balanced budgets and more than 3.5 million net new jobs had been created.

Transfer payments to provinces for health care and other social programs were at an all-time high. Debt and taxes were falling faster than ever before. In fact, the debt ratio had been more than cut in half. Our financial system was strong. Canada's annual surplus was running at about \$13 billion per year and over five years federal financial flexibility was projected at close to \$100 billion. That is what the government had to work with starting in 2006.

However, by last year, before the recession, most of that financial strength had been frittered away. It was gone because federal spending between 2006 and 2008 ballooned to unprecedented levels. It was up 18%, in other words, twice the rate of inflation before the recession. The tax base was eroded before the recession. And, all previous financial reserves, safeguards that had been put in the federal books to protect against those external nasty surprises that come along, had been eliminated before the recession.

The federal treasury stood exposed like a goalie with no pads, no stick, no face mask and no nothing, just praying that there would be no shots on goal. With the greatest of respect, that is not a competent way to proceed. It was reckless of the government to assume that the economic good times would just keep on rolling indefinitely.

The Conservatives would have been briefed by the Department of Finance that a downturn was virtually inevitable. The country had enjoyed a positive business cycle since 1993. That was the longest unbroken period of economic expansion since World War II. On the law of averages alone, it was due to come to an end. Finance officials would have warned to be prudent.

Furthermore, risks were obviously rising in the United States. The overspending American consumer had long been living beyond his or her means as reflected by massive household debt and massive U. S. budgetary and trade deficits. An unsustainable bubble was persisting in the American housing market, which if and when it collapsed, as it ultimately did, would spell big trouble for Canada.

In those circumstances, finance officials would have advised the government to avoid profligate spending, to safeguard the tax base and to maintain decent reserves in Canada's financial statements to serve as fiscal shock absorbers in the event of that inevitable downturn. However, the Conservatives chose not to follow that advice. In fact, they did the exact opposite. They overspent, eroded the tax base and eliminated the safeguards.

As a consequence, while times were still good last year, the federal government went into the hole by some \$6 billion dollars and there was nothing left to cushion the blow when the recession subsequently came along.

Another source of concern about competence and trust flows from the erratic explanations that Canadians have been given about the true state of our economy and Canada's balance sheet. All through last fall, we were told that a recession was unlikely. Indeed, even to ask about the risk of recession was labelled by the Prime Minister as fearmongering or, to use another one of his words, stupid. We were told that there would definitely be no deficit.

● (1215)

In November, the government outlined a plan, not for stimulus but for the opposite, fiscal restraint, and it falsely claimed four more surplus budgets. However, by January that storyline was abandoned. Instead, Canada would now have two years of deficit financing, \$34 billion this year and \$30 billion next year. Through February, March and April, the government insisted those numbers were absolutely accurate, all on track it claimed.

However, by May the Conservatives' story had changed again. The government had miscalculated it seems by an astounding 48%. The red ink this year would be at least \$50 billion, not \$34 billion, and the deficit would last for four years, not just two.

This month it changed again: \$50 billion became \$56 billion and the timeframe stretched from four years to six years. The cumulative damage will be something worse than \$170 billion in new debt overall.

Constantly changing stories do not demonstrate competence or inspire trust. Where does that leave us? It leaves us with a government that failed to see a recession was on the way, a government that ignored all of the warnings, a government that squandered Canada's fiscal security before there was a recession, a government that was wilfully blind, still denying the recession even after it arrived, and a government that first tabled a wrong-headed austerity program, not a stimulus plan. It was going in exactly the wrong direction. When it finally and belatedly admitted that a recession was here and that a stimulus plan was necessary, it was slow and clumsy in bringing it forward. Its so-called plan was completely suffocated by Conservative partisanship.

The Conservatives were preoccupied with photo opportunities, with advertising and with claiming credit, but in fact, less than 20% of what they promised has actually been delivered to date. Even their own favourite independent economists predict that by the end of this year they will not get that figure up to 30%.

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Meanwhile, 486,000 full time Canadian jobs have been destroyed on the government's watch. It promised 190,000 but it lost 486,000. In the coming year, the government is now promising to find, magically or mystically, 220,000 jobs. However, the Royal bank, the TD Bank, the OECD and every other credible forecaster is predicting another 200,000 jobs will be lost. Unemployment will be near 10%.

What does the wrong-headed government now propose? It proposes a new Conservative tax on jobs. It will increase payroll taxes in the form of higher employment insurance premiums, and not just by a little bit. Higher Conservative EI premiums will become the government's fastest growing source of revenue. Its own numbers prove it. Over the next five years, it will hoist its revenue from EI premiums by a whopping 60%. Just as Canadian employers will be struggling to generate new jobs, the government will hit them and their employees with a new Conservative job killing payroll tax.

Let us think about that. This is the government that said that it would never increase any taxes. The dishonesty is breathtaking.

However, just as the Conservatives increased personal income tax rates and just as they imposed a brutal new tax on income trusts, they have broken their word on taxes time and time again.

It is not just about taxes. It is about equalization, floor-crossers in the cabinet, fixed election dates, appointing more senators than any other prime minister in Canadian history and about demeaning women and minorities as unworthy left-wing fringe groups that need to be taught a lesson.

We have no confidence in the government.

• (1220)

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Madam Speaker, after listening to my hon. colleague closely, I would like to clear up the record a bit and give him some information that he may not be aware of. That is not to say that he was misleading the House but that he obviously was not telling the whole story.

He talked about partisanship with regard to infrastructure. Well, I am in charge of infrastructure in Saskatchewan. As he is the only member from Saskatchewan who is not on the government side. I would like to let him and the people in his riding, who actually deserve a better representative, know that he has \$4.5 million in an overpass project, \$2 million in rehabilitation work for the 11th and 12th Avenues, and \$1.5 million for drinking water upgrades. That is just to name a few projects in his riding which show there is no partisanship with regard to that. He does not tell that to the House.

He talked a lot about taxes and what happened in the good times. I would like to remind him and this House what happened in the good times. We paid down almost \$40 billion in deficit in the good times. He did not mention that. He did not mention the \$200 billion that went back to taxpayers over a five-year period in the fall fiscal update of 2007, which dropped corporate taxes down from 22% to 15%, dropped small business taxes down from 12% to 11% and dropped personal taxes.

What did that do? It gave every Canadian in this country tax freedom day 20 days earlier. That is the reality of what happened.

What did that do? It prepared us for the onslaught of what was happening in a global economic slowdown.

We are not just playing games with this motion today. Canadians do not deserve an election but if they are going into an election, I would like to know one policy direction that is different. I would like the opposition party that is calling for this election to explain that to Canadians.

• (1225)

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Madam Speaker, I note that the hon. gentleman began his remarks by saying that Wascana deserved a better representative. I would like to point out to him that in media surveys, not conducted by me but by community newspapers in Regina during the course of this past summer, I am very pleased to say that for the seventh consecutive year I was selected as Regina's best member of Parliament. And that is after running against three Conservatives.

He also makes reference to the infrastructure projects in Regina. I would point out that two key people are particularly responsible for the progress that has been made. The first one is Pat Fiocco, the mayor of Regina, who has lobbied long and hard for infrastructure programming and is a national leader in shaping infrastructure programming in this country. The second one is the Premier of Saskatchewan, Premier Wall, who had to bridge the financial gap in infrastructure that was left by the current federal government that did not send the money.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the previous speaker mentioned broken words from the government. Let us not forget, though, about the broken promises from the Liberals when they were the government of the day and continue with their broken words and broken promises with the Conservatives in the way that they have supported them during this whole time.

I still do not understand why the Liberals are actually calling for an election at this point in time given the fact that nothing substantial actually happened between the summer and now, except that they feel they are ready for an election.

Let us look at the history for a minute. For 13 years, the Liberals gutted EI, took no action on climate change and balanced budgets on the backs of municipalities and provinces, and also on the backs of the unemployed. Let us not forget that they are the ones who actually stole the money out of the employment insurance fund in order to give big corporate tax cuts.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. I must ask the hon. member to retract the word "stole". It really is not acceptable in the House.

**Mrs. Carol Hughes:** I will take that back, Madam Speaker. I apologize. I guess I should have said took without asking.

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**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. The hon. member for Wascana. Although the time is up, there have been interruptions that were out of order and I would like to give him about 50 seconds to respond.

I would ask, in these heated times, for hon. members to listen to the person who is speaking without heckling or interrupting. I think that would be more respectful behaviour on all sides.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Madam Speaker, the essence of the question was what has changed lately to result in this non-confidence motion. In 50 seconds I can hardly do that justice but let me mention a few things very quickly.

The government revealed that its deficit was not going to be \$50 billion but was going to be \$56 billion, that it was going to last for six years and that the total damage was going to be \$170 billion.

The government also announced, or revealed, maybe inadvertently, that it is going to be imposing a \$13 billion employment insurance payroll tax increase which it had previously denied it would do.

We also received further and greater information about the failure in infrastructure delivery. The government is claiming 80% or 90% of projects actually delivered, but when we talk to the very municipalities across the country, the vast majority of them say that the delivery rate is more like 12% to 15%.

That is what has changed, among a lot of other things.

• (1230)

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to participate in this debate on the Liberal motion, a motion of non-confidence in this Conservative government.

When listening to my leader's speech on the non-confidence motion, he said something that really resonated with me and I know that it will really resonate with thousands of Canadians and Quebeckers. He said that in the eyes of the Conservatives, adversaries are enemies and that this Conservative government and all Conservative members currently sitting in this House have demonstrated, over the past four years, that they lack the moral courage to tell Canadians and Quebeckers the truth.

Let me give an example. I was a member of the employment insurance group that tried to work over the summer. This group consisted of two Conservative members—the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, the Liberal critic for human resources and skills development, and myself, the Deputy House Leader. Three weeks passed before we had our technical briefing. We asked for it right away, but the Conservatives told us that the parliamentary secretary was on holidays and that the planned briefing meeting for the two Liberals had to be postponed. There was a third Liberal, our chief political advisor. Thus, we agreed to postpone this meeting to accommodate the Prime Minister's parliamentary secretary.

We finally had our first briefing meeting. We also submitted the Liberal proposal for making employment insurance more equitable,

and for ensuring that hundreds of thousands of Canadians who lose their jobs in these tough economic times have access to employment insurance. I am talking about people who have worked and paid their employment insurance premiums. We explained that, according to our calculations, a single national threshold of 360 hours would cost \$1.5 billion.

For months, the Conservatives kept saying, here in this House and to the public, that the Liberal proposal of 360 hours was 45 days of work for one year of employment insurance benefits. They kept saying the same thing over and over again knowing that it was not true, but they kept repeating it. We asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer to analyze the government's estimate. The government said that the 360-hour national eligibility threshold for employment insurance benefits would cost Canadians \$4 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer did an independent analysis both of the Liberal proposal and of the costing and methodology that the Conservatives used. I will quote exactly what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said in his report tabled on September 9, 2009.

• (1235)

PBO calculations show that the Government's own estimate of the static cost of the proposed 360-hour national standard is \$1.148 billion (including administrative costs).

[English]

I will repeat that. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's calculations show that the government's own estimate of the static cost of the proposed 360-hour national standard is \$1.148 billion, including administrative costs. In the opinion of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the \$1.148 billion estimate is a reasonable estimate of the cost of the proposed 360-hour national standard of EI.

Last, the government's total cost estimate in excess of \$4 billion presented on August 6 is not consistent with the proposed 360-hour national standard. Why? Because the government included all kinds of people who were not included in the Liberal proposal.

What does the government do? Does the government show moral courage and say, "We got it wrong. We inflated the numbers. We did it in good faith but our numbers were inflated almost four times the actual cost of the Liberal 360-hour proposal"? No, it has continued, in this House, to spout the same mistruth, bogus numbers. It is in black and white.

This is an example of a government and its members who are prepared to say anything in order to advance their own partisan interests.

With respect to the NDP, my goodness, I am someone who grew up admiring the NDP. Some of my heroes are the original founders of the CCF and then of the NDP. We hear the NDP members in their sanctimonious way claim that the reason they are going to prop up this incompetent, self-serving Conservative government is that the EI measures contained in Bill C-50 are so crucial and so important, and will help so many unemployed, that they are ready to put aside the 79 times they said they had no confidence in the government and prop up the government. Is that not interesting?



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[Translation]

The government brought down a budget just a few months ago. In that budget, there was over \$5 billion in employment insurance measures. The NDP voted against it. The NDP voted for an election and if the NDP had gotten what it wanted, namely an election last spring, there would be hundreds of thousands of unemployed Canadians who would not be benefiting from that \$5 billion.

[English]

They are settling for measures that will not help seasonal workers, that will not help unemployed workers who work in industries where there are periodic layoffs, that will not help women who have had children and are re-entering the workforce. That does not matter to the NDP.

I would like to hear what the NDP members are going to say to those hundreds of thousands of workers who do not benefit from the measures in Bill C-50. How are they going to explain that they are now prepared to prop up the Conservative government knowing that the government does not tell the truth, knowing that the government fudges the numbers, knowing that the government puts out bogus numbers to hoodwink Canadians? How are they going to explain that?

How do the Conservatives explain that they are prepared, day after day, to repeat the same untruths?

• (1240)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is interesting to feel the love between the former coalition partners who actually signed an agreement to work together to manage the economy of this country through a very difficult time.

The former speaker asked us to explain some things. I would like to ask my colleagues across the way to explain the difference between accusing us of spending too much money and taking us into deficit, yet at the same time accusing us of “starving the beast”, as their leader did this morning, or in other words, cutting back on government spending. These two things cannot be put in the same speech and yet they were many times today.

I would like her to respond to that.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Madam Speaker, I suggest that the member read the speech given by the leader of the official opposition. He will find his answers there.

I have a few statements to make to him.

I would like him to explain why he and his colleagues continue to repeat bogus numbers, numbers that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is as respected as the Auditor General, an independent official, has said were not correct in regard to the government's figure of \$4 billion for the Liberal proposal of benefits for a 45 day work year. Notwithstanding that the Conservatives were told in a written report that what they have been saying was not true, they continue to repeat it day after day.

I would like each one of those 140-something Conservatives to get up and explain to Canadians why they continue to repeat a lie.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the Liberal member who just spoke.

Why is she so enthusiastic about the \$1.4 billion cost of the 360-hour standard, yet she has completely forgotten about the \$57 billion—\$57,000 million—that has been taken from unemployed workers and the regions, including my riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine? How can she be so carried away by \$1.5 billion and not even mention the \$57 billion that has been purloined from the regions and the unemployed?

[English]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Just a few minutes ago, the hon. member across the way accused every member on this side of the House of a lie. I suggest that is unparliamentary language and I would request that she retract that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I did not hear that specific comment put that way. I will have to review *Hansard* and perhaps call on the member if necessary to respond.

[Translation]

I ask the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine to answer the question she was asked.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Madam Speaker, may I first respond to that point of order? Perhaps you could rule right away.

What I said was that the—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would ask the hon. member to answer the question first. If need be, she can respond to the member's point of order.

• (1245)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Madam Speaker, do you want me to answer my Bloc colleague's question first and then respond to the point of order that was raised? All right.

At the time, on the recommendation of the Auditor General of Canada in the 1980s, employment insurance contributions were paid into our government's general revenue accounts. These payments increased revenues. There were social programs, infrastructure and so on.

In 1993, the Liberal government was faced with a \$42 billion deficit left by the Conservatives, just as today they are leaving us with who knows how big—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The time for questions has expired. I would therefore ask whether there is a response to the member's point of order.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** The Conservative member stated that I had said people were lying.

[English]

Effectively, I said the Conservatives have been going around saying that the Liberal 360-hour single standard for EI eligibility would cost Canadian taxpayers over \$4 billion. I said the Parliamentary Budget Officer did an analysis and clearly stated that the Liberal proposal would cost \$1.148 billion.

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I then said that for the Conservatives, after the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report and conclusion, to continue to state, as they have been doing, that our proposal would be \$4 billion is, to repeat, a lie day after day after day. If the Speaker rules that that is unparliamentary, I will apologize.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I think that what we have here is a debate on the facts more than an actual point of order.

On another point of order, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** With all due respect, Madam Speaker, earlier today you requested that the members of the House reduce the temperature and listen to each other respectfully. We agreed with that.

Here is a member who has used the unparliamentary term “lie”. I respect your judgment, Madam Speaker, but I request that you ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary language. It is clearly unparliamentary and I ask for action.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I have heard enough from both sides and I would like to resume the debate.

The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

**Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am going to attempt to lower the temperature. We will get back on track in terms of our debate and hopefully it will be an uninterrupted few minutes.

Before I begin, I want to inform you, Madam Speaker, that I will be splitting my time with the member for Yellowhead or possibly the Minister of Health. The minister is not in the House yet, but the member for Yellowhead is prepared to proceed if the Minister of Health does not arrive in time.

I want to begin by speaking about yesterday in the province of New Brunswick. I am going to digress a little bit, but yesterday was a historic day in New Brunswick. As members from New Brunswick know, we installed a new lieutenant governor in the province. It was a great event because we now have the first aboriginal lieutenant governor in the province of New Brunswick in our proud 225 year history. As everyone knows, that person is Graydon Nicholas.

It was an honour to be there yesterday with all those others who were gathered for this historic event. As many of us know, Mr. Nicholas is a man of great character. Those of us from New Brunswick who know him will say as much. He is a man of great intellect and humility, and that showed yesterday in his speech before the gathered audience. Madam Speaker, as you well know, the premier was there.

One of the reasons why I wanted to mention this event is simply because being there and giving a speech on behalf of the Government of Canada during that ceremony made it one of the greatest days in my political life, to be very honest. It was a very generous day and the generosity of New Brunswickers really showed. It was a historic day for New Brunswick and a historic day, in a sense, for me. I was very honoured to give that speech on behalf of the Government of Canada.

We are in a minority Parliament and surprises happen in a minority Parliament. It was made possible only because two of my

colleagues on the other side of the House looked upon this event as something that they wanted to attend. They wanted to be there and allowed me to pair with them, which allowed me to be there, very honestly. Otherwise, I would not have been there. I want to identify those two members of Parliament: the Liberal member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe and the NDP member for Acadie—Bathurst.

All three of us were very honoured to be there. That is the type of cooperation that makes this place work. That is the type of cooperation that we expect across the country with our provincial partners to allow our stimulus package to work. We are not in this alone. We are in this with the municipalities and the provinces. The only ones who are not with us are those people over there. I cannot understand that. It just does not make any sense. As they say down south, it does not make a lick of sense, and it does not.

Let me go through some of what has been said by one of our strongest critics over there, the member for Parkdale—High Park. He is trying to make a fight out of the money that has gone to my home province of New Brunswick, suggesting that it was not a fair distribution of money. That is where we really take exception to what he is saying. He has implied, for example, that our government in the province of New Brunswick, again partnering with the province of New Brunswick, was wrong to invest a combined \$46.8 million in the Port of Belledune.

One only has to be a resident of New Brunswick, regardless of living in the north or south, to realize the potential of this port. What would be wrong with this investment? There is nothing wrong with it. The only reason he takes exception to it is because he says that it is in a Conservative riding.

● (1250)

The artificial political boundary that exists in and around Belledune and Bathurst, and the member for Acadie—Bathurst will say this, is the result of the Liberal gerrymandering back a number of years ago to try to create these boundaries in favour of their candidates versus those from some other party.

If they go talk to the member for Acadie—Bathurst, who is an NDP member of Parliament, he will say, without a doubt, that he is one of the biggest supporters of this project, because that is the project that is important to him.

Talk to Rayburn Doucette, a former cabinet minister in the Province of New Brunswick, a Liberal cabinet minister. This is the most important project in his life as manager of that port. More importantly, talk to the premier of the province of New Brunswick who said that this is a transformational project in northern New Brunswick.

We did it for the right reasons. We did it for the people of the province of New Brunswick. This member of Parliament is from the big city of Toronto, and there is nothing wrong with big cities, but I do not think he understands New Brunswick and how we work together to get things done. I am not sure how he does it in his political world, but we work together to get things done in New Brunswick. That is just one example.

I was in the House when the Leader of the Opposition spoke this morning. This is important. This is where the boys and girls on the other side of the aisle might start shouting me down. When the Leader of the Opposition got up today to speak, he started out by asking what we get for this stimulus spending, code word deficit spending. What are we getting?

I wonder where the Leader of the Opposition has been for the last six months. We know where he has been for the last 35 years. He has been out of the country. I almost believe that for the last six months he has been out of the country. He checked out of the hotel early.

We know what we have been doing. The people of New Brunswick, and I am speaking particularly of New Brunswick in this case, know what we are doing back home. We know what we are doing in Ontario. I will focus mostly on New Brunswick. We can focus on other provinces, which I am sure the member for Nunavut and the member for Yellowhead, depending on which one rises following my speech, will do when they get up to talk.

They go into the nitpicky little things such as criticizing us, for example, for having three environment ministers in four years. Well, those folks over there have had five leaders in five years. They cannot get their act together. There is internal squabbling within the party now, as we well know.

Basically what they are attempting to do now is force Canadians into an election that we do not need and that Canadians do not want. It is that simple. Why do it?

No one can figure it out. Their own members cannot figure it out. They were about 15 bodies short last night for the vote, and they will probably be about 12 to 15 bodies short for a vote tonight. They simply do not have their act together.

We are getting rave reviews across the country and from the world. Basically every think tank, every political party and every government in any other part of the universe is saying we are handling this worldwide recession better than any country they live or work in. In other words, in comparison to those other nations, we are doing the best, full stop, no question about that.

What would Canada gain by having an election? The truth is nothing. We do not need it. We do not want it.

We are going to come into the House tonight and vote against that motion. There will be at least one other party in this House that is going to vote against it, too, because they have an interest in helping the unemployed who do need help. They have an interest in building the economies of these provinces and regions within our country which need that type of help.

The support we are providing is the difference between moving out of a recession or staying in one. If we get mired in the type of recessions that we have seen in the past because of very ill-advised policies, Canada will go nowhere.

● (1255)

We are leading the world on this, and we will lead out of this ahead of all the other countries simply because of the leadership of the Prime Minister, our caucus members, our cabinet ministers and particularly the Minister of Finance.

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We are proud of what we are doing. We are just going to continue doing it with the help of the intelligent people on the other side of the House who are prepared to stand in their places tonight and support the Government of Canada.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to hear my colleague, with whom I have worked very well on veterans' issues, talk about confidence and all kinds of things.

I would like to know how we could possibly have confidence in a government that inherited a \$13 billion surplus, did not invest it in infrastructure, did not invest it in people, scattered it all over the country wherever it thought it could get votes, and now we turn around and we have a \$56.6 billion deficit that will be left to his children, his grandchildren and ours. How could we possibly have confidence in a government that is simply throwing money around left, right and centre all over this country? For almost four years we have been standing here holding up that party so we could try to make this country work, so that we could ensure that Canadians were being served. Clearly they were not being served and we have reached a point where we no longer can manage to hold the government up.

How could we possibly have confidence in the government, regardless of all of the squabbles it talks about? We know that it has not done the job that it was supposed to do and so we are bringing that issue to the forefront today.

● (1300)

**Hon. Greg Thompson:** Madam Speaker, this is the typical hypocrisy of the Liberals. Of course, I am not referring to the member who just spoke. We have a very good relationship with her as critic of veterans affairs and me as minister. She does a good job as critic.

However, in terms of economic policy and where the Liberal Party is going, some of the lines that it uses make no sense. On the one hand the Liberals are saying spend more money, and then on the other hand in the same conversation they say they are concerned about the deficit.

I think our track record in comparison to that of the other countries of the world speaks for itself. We are moving out of the recession more quickly simply because we have managed through this better than any other country in the world. That is simply because of the government of the day. We are focused on doing it. We know what we have to do and we are getting the job done.

Again, the Liberals cannot have it both ways. They cannot say—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I heard the member for Wascana this morning speak about how terrible it was that the deficit was going to be bigger than he thought. I was wondering how he could make statements like that when just months ago he was demanding a huge amount of infrastructure money to be approved and out the door almost immediately and said that perhaps even that was not enough spending. Then to turn around immediately after that and criticize the government for a deficit is just really hard to understand.

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I wonder whether the member could deal with some of those issues, because I did not hear him speak about that in his presentation.

**Hon. Greg Thompson:** Madam Speaker, I think that point is worth making and emphasizing. Again, it is the Liberals' attempt to have it both ways. They criticize us for not doing something, and when we do it, they criticize us again. In other words if we are spending they criticize us, and if we are not they criticize us.

It is not a very credible argument, but that is typical of their position, because they simply do not have their act together. They do not have their act together within their own political party and they do not actually have any policies. For example, if an election were triggered, what would be the ballot question in the election? What would be the question?

The Liberals have no policies based on which people can actually say that their plan is better than our plan. In other words, we are comparing two documents. The problem is we have a document Canadians can look at, and it is actually working. They do not have a plan.

What would they actually be campaigning on in the next election? Would it be change for the sake of change, or would they want an election because no one else in Canada wants one, and therefore we should have one? There is no logic to anything they are talking about.

However, I think the member has really hit the nail on the head. The Liberals attempt to talk out of both sides of their mouth, and they do not see anything wrong with that. If they have to flip-flop on a policy today, they will do it. We often say, if they have to swallow themselves whole on any given day as a result of something they did the day before, no problem, they will do it. They swallow themselves whole every day.

Eventually their new leader, and they have had five leaders in five years, had better watch his step because he will be gone too.

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to support our economic action plan and our government's support for the Canadian north. In addition to my health portfolio, I am fortunate to have responsibility as regional minister for the three territories including my home riding of Nunavut. I am proud to work with the Prime Minister who has shown unprecedented commitment to Canada's Arctic. It was my pleasure to host him and our cabinet colleagues in Iqaluit this summer.

Federal support for the territories is at an all-time high and it will continue to grow. For Nunavut this means \$1.1 billion in 2009-10, an increase of \$125 million from last year and over \$286 million since 2005-06. Our economic action plan includes important measures for northerners, building on their strengths and helping them address the challenges that they face. These measures include infrastructure projects such as roads and water and sewer system upgrades across the north; reduction in taxes and freezing of employment insurance rates; actions to stimulate housing construction; improved access to financing and support for businesses; an enhancement to employment insurance, and more funding for skills and training.

In Nunavut alone, we are providing the people and businesses with a tax relief of \$13.9 million over the next five years. The new renovation tax credit will provide up to \$1,350 per homeowner, which will benefit Nunavut homeowners by up to \$1.9 million over the next two years.

Nunavut is also benefiting from targeted investments including \$17 million to accelerate the construction of the Pangnirtung small craft harbour; \$100 million to support renovation and the construction of new social housing units; a share of the \$140 million for northern economic development programs; and a share of \$87 million to maintain and upgrade Arctic research facilities.

This list is long, but I would like to focus on a couple of the economic action plan initiatives that are important to me, the first in my regional capacity and the second as Canada's health minister. Our Arctic research infrastructure fund provides \$85 million to maintain or upgrade key Arctic research facilities. This funding complements our government's commitment to a world-class high Arctic research station and allows research facilities in the north to be reinvigorated. The program is being implemented by organizations that operate at existing research facilities in the north, and it is providing economic stimulus and creating jobs there.

Let me put on my health minister's hat for a moment. I am proud of our government's commitment to protecting the health and well-being of first nations people and Inuit. A month ago in Winnipeg, it was my great pleasure to announce details of \$135 million for new construction and the renovation of health service infrastructure in first nations communities across Canada. This investment means new refurbished health centres and nurses residences for many of the remote and isolated first nations communities that are serviced by Health Canada, and this will provide immediate economic benefit by creating employment opportunities in those areas. This funding supports more than 40 projects involving new construction of health services infrastructure and approximately 230 renovations of existing infrastructure.

Our economic action plan also commits another \$305 million over two years to strengthen first nations and Inuit health programs including \$240 million to ensure that eligible first nations and Inuit continue to receive non-insured health benefits such as dental, vision care, medical transportation and access to a range of drugs not covered by other programs; and \$65 million to ensure 24/7 availability of nursing services in the remote and isolated first nations communities serviced by Health Canada.

There is so much good work under way. Members of the House and all Canadians should be encouraged to take a look at the [actionplan.gc.ca](http://actionplan.gc.ca) website and take stock of the great progress that has been achieved to date. There is so much more for us to take pride in. They should take a look at the project map that is available on the website and click on some of the icons marking projects that are scattered across the north.

In Nunavut, they will see things like construction of the new Taloyoak Hamlet office; funding for scientific and traditional research on polar bears and other wildlife in the region; new laboratories, storage space and research facilities for the sustained Arctic observing network and other scientific initiatives; and more.

*Business of Supply*

●(1305)

In the Northwest Territories they will find details of both our progress on the underground utility corridor repair for the town of Norman Wells, water treatment plant renovations and other investment in research facilities, infrastructure and government buildings in Yellowknife and more.

Let us not forget Yukon, where there is new housing for seniors, more investment in Arctic research infrastructure, projects to enhance the safety and reliability of roads, and again there is more.

All Canadians also want our government and our country to maintain its focus on implementing the economic action plan so they can continue to see the benefits of lower taxes, better infrastructure, improved social housing, continued training for workers and assistance where and when it is needed.

I call on all the members of the House to listen to their constituents and support them and our government in “Staying On Course”, as our latest economic action plan report is titled, in leading Canada out of the recession.

Our government has earned the trust of northerners, like all Canadians, to help lead them through this difficult period in our global economy. Like those south of 60°, northerners do not want another federal election. Like all my colleagues in the House, I heard that loud and clear when travelling throughout Nunavut a few weeks ago, just as I have heard it loud and clear from across the country in recent weeks, as I work with the provinces and territories, first nations and Inuit, the medical community and other stakeholders to prepare for what may come with H1N1 this fall.

An election is the last thing Canadians want or need right now, for so many reasons. The only campaign that Canadians are interested in are immunization campaigns.

I appreciate the opportunity to present this on behalf of the northern territories.

●(1310)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the Minister of Health, who is of aboriginal descent. Perhaps we will finally get a response to our questions on two rather troubling decisions made by the government, decisions that I believe go against the interests of aboriginal peoples.

The minister listed some less than significant measures taken by the government. Could she tell us why the first action taken by the government—the Conservatives—when it took power was to cancel the Kelowna accord, which would have allocated \$5 billion over five years to help aboriginal people build infrastructure and develop means to manage their own affairs?

I have another similar question. Could the Minister of Health, who is of aboriginal descent, and who I am sure sincerely wants to help her people, tell us why her government refused—it is now the only one—to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

*[English]*

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Madam Speaker, Nunavut was created 10 years ago. As a northerner, I saw very little progress happening in the north, which is why I chose to run in the federal election to make a difference for northerners.

Much work remains to be done in the north as it relates to infrastructure, the implementation of our land claims agreement to deal with the transition of Nunavut's division to a new territory and our claim to Arctic sovereignty and so on. However, the government has done more for the Nunavut Territory than was done in the 13 years under the Liberal government. I lived through it. I was a deputy minister of a number of departments. I was also the finance and health minister in a territory, where we saw no progress.

In a short period of time, our government has invested an enormous amount of infrastructure dollars to help northerners and aboriginal people get the authority they need to maintain and develop their own territory.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we are still looking forward very much to receiving the minister's report about the unfortunate incident of body bags being sent to northern and remote communities when those same communities do not have access to necessary flu supplies. The health committee has been waiting since Monday to receive her report.

However, if she does not have an answer today, I would like to ask her about why her government cut off benefits under the non-insured health benefit program, which is specifically designed to help people in northern and remote communities, first nations communities, people on reserves everywhere who need access to medical services in the city, for example, in the case of dialysis.

It used to be that federal governments took this responsibility seriously and helped cover transportation, housing and food costs for patients who needed to receive dialysis, no matter how long it was required. Now people are being cut off after three months and left to their own resources or to social assistance, which is, in effect, offloading it on to the provinces. Why and will she restore this program to the full extent that it was at previously?

●(1315)

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq:** Madam Speaker, I can state what we have been doing for first nations communities in respect of health.

I mentioned in my speech that in this budget we invested \$240 million to increase the non-insured health benefits for first nations people and Inuit. That covers dental care, vision care, medical transportation and a number of drugs that are not covered by other programs. At the same time, we have also invested \$65 million to ensure nursing services are available 24/7 in remote first nations and Inuit communities. Also, a month ago it was my pleasure to announce \$135 million to improve the infrastructure of health facilities in a number of first nations communities across the country.

*Business of Supply*

The member asked those questions, but she voted against all those initiatives. These initiatives are going to assist first nations people. I am working very closely with the Manitoba chiefs and chiefs across our country in dealing with the health care services they need.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to a motion of non-confidence we have proposed against the Conservative government. It is easy. The matter is clear. Parliament has lost confidence in the Conservative Party. Before we say we have lost confidence, as a matter of principle and to play fair and ensure it has a chance, we offer it the opportunity to show what it is capable of and what it can really do for the people. It cannot say that it will help one group of people and decide not to help another, that it will set one group against another.

At some point, we have to look at the facts. To give them a chance, we look at the facts. We look to see whether they have tried to make things better for the people, not only for those it represents, but for all Canadians.

Before I forget, I would like to mention that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Vancouver Centre.

First we have to look to see if the government passes the test. Good management of the country's public finances was in place. The Conservatives inherited a \$14 billion surplus. Such surpluses were unthinkable in the time of the preceding government, before 1993. That government was a Conservative one as well. The Liberals put the finances in order. They made sure they made the people proud of their government. What happened? The Conservatives presented a budget in the spring of 2009 saying there would be a deficit of \$34 billion because of the economic crisis. That does not necessarily mean assistance in the amount of \$34 billion to the public. Part of it was due to bad management on their part and then part of it was set aside to help the public. The government and the Minister of Finance are supposed to ensure they deliver the goods and the figures. In March, the figure was \$34 billion. Oddly enough, in June the figure had jumped to \$50 billion, and in September, it was \$56 billion. This is a record deficit for Canada. The first test has been failed.

My second point concerns help to the forestry industry. Forests are the natural wealth of the riding I represent. Most employees there work directly or indirectly in the area of forestry.

What did the Conservatives do to pass the test? In 2005, we, the Liberal government, announced help for the forestry industry in the amount of \$1.5 billion, even before the major crisis hit us. It was a preventive measure taken proactively. It was \$1.5 billion. Whom was it for? It was for the workers and their families. It was to ensure that, in the event of a crisis—as I mentioned—we could lessen the impact and be ready to move to another stage, as needed.

What did the Conservatives do after their election in January 2006? They totally eliminated the announced \$1.5 billion. What else did they do for forestry when it came time to help the industry and the pulp and paper sector? During the crisis with the American government over red liquor and black liquor, what did they do? Absolutely nothing. They set up rules and conditions few paper companies could meet. If they could not meet them, it meant that

employees could not work and families could not get the help they needed. In terms of the forestry industry, the government has failed.

As for employment insurance, that is an issue that I have been working on since I was elected in 2004 to ensure that the people I represent, and those represented by other members of Parliament, have a fair chance of getting the help they need to ensure that their families have food on the table, enough money to pay the power bill to heat their houses, the rent, the mortgage and the car payments if they live in a rural community so that they can get themselves to work once they find new jobs.

● (1320)

The Conservatives allowed the system to degenerate. People had to wait up to 55 days to receive their first employment insurance cheques, their cheques for one week's worth of benefits. Imagine a family getting no help from the federal government for two months, help that they paid for when they contributed to the employment insurance fund. When it comes to employment insurance, the Conservative government failed the test.

Now the Conservatives are telling us that they are going to come up with new rules, a new employment insurance system. With whose help? With the complicity of the NDP. When the Conservative government gives us its new definition of employment insurance and tries to convince us that it will benefit all Canadians, the important thing is to figure out who it will really help. Who will be entitled to benefits under the new system?

I want to talk first about the comments the Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism made last Monday, when she said the people who will get employment insurance benefits are those who deserve them.

The people who deserve these benefits are all the workers who paid into employment insurance. In the eyes of the parliamentary secretary and her government, however, seasonal workers, people in the tourism industry, in construction, in roads, in the fisheries, in forestry, and so forth are not entitled to any additional weeks.

Why did the Conservative government turn its back on these people? Why did it not give everyone the tools that are needed?

Long-tenured workers can be just as much seasonal workers as factory workers. Seasonal workers may have worked 10, 15, 20, 25 or 30 years not just in the same industry but for the same company. They are long-tenured, but they are not going to get the help they need. Why do the Conservatives decide who will be helped and who will not? The Conservative government was a failure here. It flunked the test.

*Business of Supply*

If we look at the entire economy and all our economic development, it is terrible to see how many companies all over the country have had to shut down. The workers in these companies lost their jobs—people who were the bread winners for their families. At first I told myself this happens to other people. We thought we were fortunate in Madawaska—Restigouche, but all of a sudden, we too were caught up. There were companies like Shermag, Fraser, AbitibiBowater, Atlantic Yarns, WHK Woven Labels Ltd. and so forth, just to mention a few of the names.

When it came to economic development, the Conservative government did nothing at all for these companies. It did nothing to help the workers in these plants. It did nothing at all for the families of these workers. If we look at what was actually done for economic development and assistance for industry, the Conservative government was simply a failure. It flunked the test.

I know I am quickly running out of time. Looking at just these few things, how can we have confidence in the Conservative government who said that people from the Atlantic region are defeatist? How can we still have confidence in a government that was given a chance to provide some rules, justice for the most vulnerable, and a system to get us out of the crisis? Instead of that, they did only one thing: fail.

You indicate I have one minute left. I still want to mention economic development and infrastructure.

It is all very well to announce infrastructure projects all over the country, but when Conservative members come to make announcements in a town and two months later no agreement has been received duly signed by the government to issue a call for tenders, it is terrible. It means that not one person can go to work because there is the two-month wait to receive the government documents and then there is the engineering assessment and the call for tenders. We are already in October, for heaven's sake.

• (1325)

Winter is around the corner. There will certainly not be any work done on water and sewer infrastructure in November, December, January or February. That is only one example. The government has obviously failed as well when it comes to infrastructure. For that reason, it must—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

Questions and comments. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

[English]

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened to what the member had to say. He was all over the road with his comments. He was talking about things that were not even related.

Let us talk about something which I think the member should be concerned about. Let us talk about why he should be concerned about the position he is putting forward. His constituents want the government to focus on fighting a global economic recession and to show leadership at a time when it is desperately needed. The Prime Minister is doing exactly that. The member wants to fight the

recovery. He is joining his leader in fighting the recovery that Canadians want to see.

Today, the IMF said exactly what our Prime Minister has been saying for months, that Canada was the last country to enter the recession and Canada will be the first country to emerge from it. That is what the IMF said. It said Canada—

**An hon. member** They are lying.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order. I ask members, if they have nothing better to do than to heckle when somebody is speaking to please leave the House.

The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Madam Speaker, the OECD also said that Canada's unemployment rate will reach 10%.

The Parliamentary Secretary should be ashamed. In order to restore the confidence of the Canadian people, the first thing to do is to not pick and choose who will be eligible for additional weeks of benefits. His colleague, the parliamentary secretary, said that those who deserve benefits will have them and those who do not will not.

Why are the seasonal workers of this country not entitled to even one additional week? It is because of the Conservative government and the NDP. That is the reality. Before leading us on about the economic recovery, this government should ensure that all employees, all Canadian citizens, have what they deserve and are treated fairly. That is not what is happening in this country right now.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would first like to reassure our colleague that the Bloc will vote with them on this confidence motion, which is quite justified. Our colleague spoke about some of the reasons why this motion is warranted.

His strongest argument is the extent to which the employment insurance plan has deteriorated. He knows all about it because it was his party that destroyed it.

I will ask my colleague a question. I know that he has worked hard on the issue of 360 hours, even though we do not know if he still stands by it. I would like to hear what he has to say about older workers who lose their jobs. We know that they are most at risk. Does he agree that an income support program should be reintroduced for older workers who lose their jobs?

• (1330)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I will repeat my request that members in the House please abstain from heckling each other and talking when they have not been recognized. That includes the parliamentary secretary.

The hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for calling the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage to order. I had to speak louder to make sure that people could hear what I had to say about what was being said across the way.

To come back to what my Bloc Québécois colleague was saying, the reality of employment insurance also affects our older workers, those who are around 55. The way the Conservatives are managing the economic crisis, people who have recently lost their jobs are not eligible for additional assistance.

I want to come back to the additional 20 weeks of employment insurance. When someone loses their job, it is important that they are eligible for additional assistance. Older workers who lose their jobs do not necessarily meet the conditions and criteria that the Conservatives have included in their new bill. In many cases, they are not entitled. Many have temporary part time work and do not qualify under the new rules and conditions set by the Conservative government.

[English]

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to this important motion, a motion with which I agree.

This has been probably the worst economic depression in Canada since the Great Depression. Many young people have lost their jobs. Some 1.6 million Canadians have no jobs and half of them have no access to any kind of unemployment benefits. We are facing a recession. We have been told by the Minister of Finance that the deficit is \$56 billion and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that it could be over \$125 billion within the next five years. We are living in a very bad time. Jobs are being lost. Many important businesses in the manufacturing and forestry sectors are facing a kind of recession from which they will never recover.

It was in that environment the Liberal opposition decided that we would support the Conservative government when it came out, kicking and screaming, with an economic stimulus package in January. While we did not think the package was perfect, we supported it, albeit reluctantly. We had hoped it would provide the stimulus needed for jobs and that it would assist Canadian businesses, workers and their families in these desperate times.

Before even seeing the stimulus package, the New Democratic Party decided to vote against it, and it did so 79 times in six months. How quickly those members cast aside their principles this week.

We gave the Conservative government three chances. We put it on probation in March, June and September to see whether or not its stimulus package would provide results, whether it would work, whether the money would be out there for Canadians, and whether it would meet the desired outcome of jobs and economic stability.

The Liberal opposition has, after that period of time, lost confidence in the present government on many counts, but I will only mention four. The first one is the broken promises by the government. The second one is the government's continual misrepresentation of facts to Canadians. The third one is the government's lack of fiscal responsibility, accountability and its plain

incompetence. The fourth one is the government's failing its citizens by picking and choosing which are worthy of its support.

Let me speak about broken promises.

About 114,000 unemployed construction workers have been waiting since February for infrastructure money to flow. Saying that the wheels of government move very slowly is not a good answer. It is rather cavalier. Families cannot hang on for six months without paying their rent, without having any access to food and clothing for their children. They are finding it hard to make ends meet.

Construction work is seasonal and many of the workers are not eligible for unemployment benefits. Many are on welfare. The majority of workers in this country do not wish to go on welfare. Welfare rates have doubled in this country. People want to work.

The government vowed never to raise taxes. That is another broken promise. Last week there was a stealthy little grab of \$13 billion in payroll taxes. That was a cruel thing to do. Small and medium size businesses actually create 80% of the jobs in this country and they are having a difficult time with credit. Retail sales are down. Many people are losing their jobs. The domino effect of lower sales and not supporting small and medium size businesses is high. To add a payroll tax at this point in time is cruel. It certainly will not help to create jobs.

Another broken promise involves the pine beetle and the fires in B.C. In 2006, \$200 million was promised and \$200 million was promised in 2007, but none of that money has flowed to any of the communities. In fact, they have only seen \$80 million of it. Everyone predicted the raging forest fires. Money was needed for research for new employment opportunities and for dealing with the fires.

● (1335)

The government also broke its promise to aboriginal people. Not too long ago there was a moving apology in the House to the aboriginal people where the government across the way cried tears of apology. Today we see that the health, education and housing of aboriginal people has worsened.

The second thing concerns the misrepresentation of facts. The Minister of Finance reportedly said, "We cannot ask Canadians to tighten their belts during tougher times without looking in the mirror".

In December 2008, the Minister of Finance said that there was a surplus. Earlier this year, he said that there was a paper recession only, then that there was a \$34 billion shortfall, and then that there is a \$56 billion deficit. As I said earlier, the Parliamentary Budget Officer is predicting a \$156 billion deficit over the next five years. That is the first misrepresentation of facts.

The second misrepresentation of facts is brazenly taking credit for the Canadian banking system being so stable when the government knows who made it so.



*Business of Supply*

I also want to talk about misspending. The Privy Council Office, which serves the Prime Minister, spent an extra \$20 million this year. The government spent \$84.1 million in advertising this year. We saw that the federal cabinet expansion in the fall cost taxpayers another \$3.9 million in salaries for ministers and their staff. The Privy Council has said that the professional policy advisors for the Prime Minister and ministers will cost \$124 million this year. We have a government that promised to tighten its belt and a finance minister who said that the government was directing government ministers and deputy ministers from every department and agency of the government to reign in their spending. This is unacceptable. Canadians are tightening their belts. They are doing without but the government does not know how to do that.

Since it came in, the government has spent 30% more than any other government in the history of this country. That is extremely unacceptable, irresponsible and lacking in accountability. It also shows incompetence and mismanagement of fiscal affairs.

Another case of unaccountability, mismanagement and incompetence that I want to talk about is H1N1. When the Department of Health sent body bags to the aboriginal communities, which, because of overcrowding, poor housing and poor water, had high incidents of H1N1, the minister said that she would investigate it. The minister is supposed to know what is going on in her department. Nothing should go out of her department unless she is briefed first and accepts it. To investigate it after the fact is unacceptable. The minister did not know what was going on and to say that she was not going to accept responsibility and investigate what was going on is a joke.

Finally, I have one last piece. The government has been failing citizens by picking and choosing who are worthy. Bill C-50, which was just recently introduced in the House, is a fine example of that. Seventy-two percent of single parent Canadians cannot afford to miss a paycheque. We were just told this by the Canadian Payroll Association. Many people are two paycheques away from bankruptcy. Seventy percent of those Canadians are in the age group of under 36. These are the people with the lowest wages because they are at the beginning of their careers. These are the people with very small children. These are the people who just bought a house and are facing a huge mortgage. These are the people who will be laid off first and yet this bill does nothing for them. It does not even recognize their plight.

The bill also said that it was for long-tenured workers. Forestry workers will not benefit from the bill. In British Columbia, where the forestry sector has been going down, people have been losing their jobs on and off for the last four to five years. They do not qualify for employment insurance because they have been collecting unemployment insurance over the last four years. People need to have been paying 30% of the maximum premiums and been working for 12 to 15 years to qualify. That rules out a whole lot of people, especially contract workers, women, seasonal workers and workers in the IT sector who are now working on contract and are losing their jobs.

Nothing has been done for our youth who have a 20% unemployment rate, the second highest since 1977. Two hundred and ten thousand youth had no summer jobs and they do not know how they will pay for school. Seventy-five percent of skills training for youth has gone to Conservative ridings.

We have no confidence in the government. It has shown itself to be utterly unworthy of the trust of Canadians as well.

• (1340)

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Madam Speaker, what an interesting conversation my colleague was having across the way. I am trying to understand the confidence of the Liberals because right now I do not think they have the confidence of the whole party within the motion that is before us.

One of the things the Liberals do not seem to understand is that the Conservative government, quite honestly, has been the only Parliament and the only government that has reached out and built partnerships.

The member made quite a good statement at the start when she recognized that this is one of the worst recessions since World War II.

The duration of unemployment in Canada right now is 15 weeks. During pre-recession it was 14 weeks. In 1991, which was not a global recession, under the Liberal watch the duration of unemployment was 20 weeks. Why is that? It is actually because during its term, and we listened earlier to the leader, it was about how to pay down the debt. It did all those things by putting it on the backs of everybody else. The Liberals unloaded it onto the provinces and the municipalities. They cut our military, our agriculture and our health transfers.

What we have now is a partnership. We have been recognized globally as a leader going into this recession and a leader coming out, so now we have a—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I must interrupt the hon. member to give the member for Vancouver Centre a chance to respond. There is only a five minute question and answer period.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member should look at his facts.

In 1991 there was a Conservative government at the time, so his facts about 1991 do not pertain to the Liberals at all.

Second, speaking about partnerships, changing the social union agreement allowed for the federal government, under the Liberal government of the day, to begin to forge strong partnerships with the provinces. In fact, the national child care program came about as a \$6 billion partnership. The Kelowna accord came about as a \$5 billion partnership. These are the partnerships we forged. We worked with the provinces to make things happen because we knew that in many instances the federal government was the glue that held this country together.

• (1345)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I compliment my colleague on raising a variety of issues but there is one in particular I would ask about.

*Business of Supply*

She was first elected in 1993 and was here when we had to deal with the \$42 billion deficit that was left by the previous Conservative government. One of the major concerns we have is the need in the future to have sufficient funds for health care, an aging population and so on.

I am very concerned with how we will deal with what we know is probably close to a \$60 billion deficit that is being left by the current Conservative government, hence the reason we do not have any confidence in it to continue in power.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague just what the mood was around here when her government had to make the kinds of cuts that were required at the time when she first came into office.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Madam Speaker, the old saying that Tory times are tough times could not be any truer than it is today. At that time, as my first colleague mentioned, it was not a global recession. It was a national recession, which means that it was brought about by the government of the day through bad management, and we are seeing it again. The deficit was \$43 billion, youth unemployment was at 24% and mortgages were at 18%. I do not know if people remember that.

We, as a government, tightened our belt and became lean. We actually cut the things that the present government does not know how to cut. The government has bloated its spending this year during a recession.

We had to face tough choices but we knew that the most important thing was not to have a jobless recovery so we focused on jobs, jobs, jobs. In three years, we got rid of that deficit and started to pay down the debt. Canada moved from a developing country status to number one in the world in terms of economic development. We left a surplus for the present government to squander.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord. We have about 15 minutes left before question period starts. I hope it will not be too heated in the House and that everyone will remain calm.

Today, we are debating a Liberal motion that asks whether we still have confidence in the Conservative government, the government in power. Before I answer that question, I must say that the Bloc Québécois has analyzed all of the Conservatives' actions and decisions since their election. We concluded that the Bloc Québécois no longer has confidence in the government and that it will support the Liberals' motion for a number of reasons.

We asked ourselves two questions: do we have confidence in how the government deals with Quebec and the needs of Quebec? For example, what actions has the government taken to support the manufacturing and forestry industries? We know that since 2005 these sectors have been pressuring the government for assistance. The forestry and manufacturing industries were sacrificed during the economic crisis, but since 2005, these industries have been losing ground even more quickly, and we should have helped them through the crisis. In Quebec, plants have been closed and people have been laid off. Some people have been temporarily laid off and some are permanently unemployed. We need only think of AbitibiBowater in

Portneuf, and in Beaupré, where this week, 400 workers were temporarily put out of work, knowing that perhaps this company would not be saved in time for them to return. Some workers will be sacrificed.

Another question we asked ourselves had to do with employment insurance. For years, the Bloc has been calling for a real reform of the employment insurance program. We have witnessed the pillaging of the EI fund. The Bloc Québécois condemned the Liberals for taking money from the EI fund, putting it in the consolidated revenue fund and using it to pay government expenses. The workers and employers who paid into the fund should have had a say in how the money in that fund was distributed.

One might have thought the Conservative government would have appreciated the urgent need for action to help certain workers make it through the crisis. Moreover, the OECD made two requests, one of which was to not let workers down. A good way to not let workers down when jobs are being lost or people are being laid off temporarily is to make sure that they receive employment insurance so that they can get through the crisis. We also learned that unemployment in Canada would reach 10%. That, too, should have sounded the alarm for the Conservative Party.

But the Conservative Party has never believed in the economic crisis. I remember the debates we had in the Quebec City area during the election campaign. The Conservative Party said that there was no economic crisis and that everything was rosy. It wanted people to believe that that was self-evident. Meanwhile, the United States was entering an economic slowdown. When 85% of our exports go to the United States, we should be worried about whether American consumers will consume as much and buy Canadian products. It did not take a master's degree in economics to see that there would be an economic slowdown in Canada. Yet the Conservatives kept mum and remained passive about the economic crisis.

• (1350)

How can we believe that they are taking the economic crisis in Canada and in Quebec seriously, or that they will help the aerospace sector and the manufacturing industries that are also suffering from the crisis?

The Conservatives were elected, but since voters did not quite believe them, they only gave them a minority government. The Conservatives then came up with a budget in 2009. Everyone was worried and we expected them to shake things up and to show that they were taking the situation seriously. What they did instead was to introduce an ideological plan. They forgot all about a plan to recover from the economic crisis.

*Business of Supply*

Instead, the Conservatives proposed an ideological type of plan, because they wanted to first target political financing, but not for just any party. Indeed, under that plan the Bloc Québécois would no longer be eligible for political funding. This shows how the Conservatives engaged in petty politics, this at a time when the public was expecting the government to deal with the economic crisis.

The Conservatives forgot about the crisis and engaged further in petty politics by eliminating the court challenges program. As members know, francophones outside Quebec would often rely on that program to be represented before the courts, when they were overlooked regarding certain requests, or when they were being ostracized. Women also used that program for the same reasons.

Why did the Conservatives make that decision? Because the program bothered them and they did not want to pay for people who were challenging them. That is some kind of openness on the part of a government and a political party that are supposed to make sound use of the power delegated to them by voters through a democratic process.

I believe the Bloc Québécois is an opposition party that is well represented here, because, over the years, Quebecers have consistently elected a majority of Bloc members. Members opposite should ask themselves why Bloc Québécois members get elected, despite what the minister from the Quebec City region said this morning, namely that the Bloc's presence here is a paradox. I told her that the real paradox is that she is a minister.

So, our study provided us with a number of examples which showed the direction taken by the government in various areas, whether social, such as employment insurance, cultural or economic, and which also showed that this government has not met Quebec's needs.

Why was \$10 billion injected so quickly into Ontario's auto industry? We are told that this saved hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands of jobs. However, jobs have also been lost in the forestry industry and manufacturing industry in Quebec. Yet Quebec was given only \$70 million. One can understand why Quebecers feel abandoned by the Conservative government. That is just one example among many. I could give other examples besides employment insurance.

To prevent more jobs from being lost, instead of introducing Bill C-50, which excludes workers laid off temporarily because they file too many claims for employment insurance, what was really needed was a complete overhaul of the system, taking into account those who are excluded from employment insurance.

The Conservative government says it is acknowledging long-tenured workers. That is great. I have nothing against that. However, they have forgotten seasonal workers, for example, who are having difficulty getting their jobs back, because their industries are working at a much slower pace. They have also forgotten people who work in the tourism, construction and manufacturing sectors, just to name a few.

We would have liked to see the employment insurance system completely overhauled and to have it looked at very seriously. But the opposite is happening. We are facing exactly the opposite

situation. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Bloc Québécois will be voting with the Liberal Party, because the Conservatives have not fulfilled their duty to Quebec.

• (1355)

[English]

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-  
sor, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's speech was quite thorough and touched on many subjects.

I found there were many similarities in that speech with my home region on the east coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly in three areas, which I would like her to discuss: first, seasonal employment; second, cultural spending and cultural promotion; and third, the forestry industry.

[Translation]

This is very important to those of us on Canada's east coast, in Newfoundland and Labrador.

[English]

At this time when we talk about seasonal employment, there really has been a degrading of the status of someone involved in seasonal employment. Bill C-50 is actually a good illustration of how that works.

What I mean by that is the bill was supposed to focus on someone who is a long-tenured worker unless one is in the seasonal industry. Therefore, the aspect of being a long-tenured worker is no longer eligible. Over a five year period if one qualifies for more than 36 weeks of benefits, one does not qualify for this particular extension, coupled with the fact that many of the mill workers during shutdown times, perhaps the mill had too much inventory or the like, also qualify for EI benefits. Therefore, they would have about seven weeks or perhaps more.

The second issue I would like her to discuss is with regard to culture. What we have heard in the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is that there does not seem to be a lot to promote culture outside of Canada.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague to comment on those issues.

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Madam Speaker, that is a huge question, and I have only about a minute to respond.

With respect to the employment insurance program, the government should have launched a pilot project, not introduced a bill. We are in the middle of an economic crisis, so it would have been much easier to get immediate consensus for a pilot project, and then to have gone ahead with the necessary funding. Instead, the government chose to introduce a bill, which takes time. The Conservatives also turned down the Bloc Québécois' offer to send the bill to committee right away. We could have heard from witnesses about the impact of Bill C-50. They would have told us about how the program left them out.

*Statements by Members*

Instead, here we are asking questions in the House and never getting good answers even though the minister thinks she is giving people answers. They say that 190,000 workers will have access to these benefits, but we looked at the numbers, and we do not understand how 190,000 workers are supposed to benefit. For that to happen, 85% of claimants would have to reach the end of their benefit period, but only some 25% do. Most people will not be eligible for the five to 20 additional weeks because they never reach the end of their benefit period.

Once again, the Conservative government is failing to meet the expectations of thousands of Canadian workers, both in Quebec and elsewhere, who are unemployed today and dealing with poverty as a result.

The government refused to eliminate the two-week waiting period. People who lose their jobs have to go without income for two weeks. Instead, the Conservatives brought in measures that do not kick in until the end of the benefit period. Why? Because periodically unemployed workers never reach the end of the benefit period. They stop collecting benefits before that. They will therefore never be entitled to the extra weeks of benefits. The government is just trying to save money with these measures.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

### FIREARMS REGISTRY

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Madam Speaker, when the Liberals first proposed the federal long gun registry, they claimed that it would cost taxpayers \$2 million, but the real price tag has been \$2 billion. They claimed it would fight crime, but it has really only penalized law-abiding hunters, farmers and ranchers, since everyone knows criminals do not and will not register their guns.

The registry has failed to save a single life and it has been an abysmal failure. It has diverted resources from law enforcement efforts that would keep Canadians safe from real criminals.

Our Conservative government has made several attempts to abolish the registry only to have opposition parties stand in the way at every turn.

Now is the time for members opposite to admit their error, to stand up for law-abiding firearms owners, and to do the right thing by supporting Bill C-391 sponsored by my Conservative colleague from Portage—Lisgar to finally abolish the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

\* \* \*

### PERSONS CASE

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the six recipients of Governor General awards to commemorate the Persons Case. The Persons Day award recognizes outstanding individuals who have contributed to the advancement of women's equality in their communities in

Canada and throughout the world. The award was instituted in 1979 to honour the 50th anniversary of the Persons Case.

Recipients this year include: Jeanette Corbiere-Lavell, the newly elected president of NWAC; Daphne Dumont; Bev LeFrancois; Karen Messing; Pauline Fogarty; and a dear friend, Mary Scott, who is at the heart of the equality seeking movement in Winnipeg.

Their contributions to women's equality include: LEAF, UNIFEM, community crisis centres, workplace equity, rights for aboriginal women, and mental health advocacy.

May their dedication and achievements serve as an inspiration to those who continue to work for women's equality and justice worldwide.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### LE DÉTOUR DE NOTRE-DAME-DU-LAC CHEESE FACTORY

**Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, Le Détour de Notre-Dame-du-Lac cheese factory just won first prize in the Caseus Quebec contest, with its Citadelle cheese.

This cheese factory keeps on winning awards. In May of this year, it also distinguished itself by taking first prize in the “soft-ripened cheese” category, with Le Marquis de Témiscouata, at the sixth Canadian Cheese Grand Prix. That cheese is made with milk from a herd of Jersey cows on the Marquis farm, in Saint-Louis-du-Ha! Ha!, in the Témiscouata region.

The Le Détour cheese factory also did well at the most prestigious North American cheese competition, held in Chicago in July 2008, where it won three prizes.

Congratulations to co-owners Ginette Bégin and Mario Quirion for their excellent work.

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[English]

### MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Madam Speaker, on the eve of Mental Health Awareness Week let us agree that nothing short of a national mental health strategy is required.

The report, “Out of the Shadows At Last”, and the establishment of the Mental Health Commission of Canada under the direction of Senator Kirby have given mental health issues a national focus. Now it is time to turn this focus into a national policy, a federally funded program, working hand-in-glove with our provincial and territorial governments and our first nations, Inuit and Métis partners.

Now is the time for a national housing strategy that my colleague from Vancouver East initiated and was passed by the House yesterday, a strategy to overcome barriers that force people living with mental illness into deplorable housing situations or out of housing altogether.

Now is the time to implement Roy Romanow's recommendation to have mental health case management, intervention services, and coverage for medication management included in the scope of medically necessary services under the Canada Health Act.

For the 20% of Canadians who experience mental health illnesses over their lifetime, and aboriginal youth who are six times more likely to commit suicide, and on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Canada Health Act, that is the least we can do.

\* \* \*

●(1405)

### CHINA

**Mrs. Alice Wong (Richmond, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

In Canada, there are many individuals and families of Chinese heritage who proudly call Canada their home. Chinese Canadians have played a significant role in shaping Canada into the nation we are so proud of today, from the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway to serving in the Canadian armed forces.

In my riding of Richmond, over half the population is of ethnic Chinese descent. Both China and Canada have worked hard on strengthening ties through trade, business and cultural exchanges. These ties become stronger each year. Both imports and exports have quadrupled over the past decade emphasizing the importance of the Asia-Pacific gateway strategy.

We look forward to continuing this mutually beneficial relationship. On behalf of the constituents in Richmond, I would like to say:

[*Member spoke in Chinese and provided the following translation:*]

Happy Birthday to the People's Republic of China.

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### CANADIAN FORCES

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the week of August 17, I and seven other members of the House were embedded in the operation maple defender at the Canadian Manoeuvre Centre in Wainwright, Alberta. As elected representatives of the House of Commons, our shared goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and conditions of our troops, as they undergo training for combat.

This is a 620 square kilometre site, where full-time soldiers and army reservists prepare for the theatre in which they are about to do battle. Units from across Canada and the U.S. come here to properly integrate with each other before they are deployed.

This important experience has given us deeper insight into the courage and professionalism of the Canadian Forces, the conditions in which they train and fight and, ultimately, the sacrifices they make in the name of our country.

I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in expressing our support for the men and women of our Canadian Forces and

### Statements by Members

supporting our troops before they leave, while they are overseas and especially when they return home.

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### ORANGEVILLE DISTRICT SECONDARY SCHOOL

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, October 3 the Orangeville District Secondary School will be celebrating its 125th anniversary.

Orangeville District Secondary School was the first high school in the town of Orangeville and district. It was originally constructed in 1884. At the time of construction, the building was considered one of the most modern schools in the province and was thought to be more than enough room for the 150 students in attendance under principal Alexander Steele.

Now, 125 years later, ODSS is home to almost 1,600 students and 133 extraordinary teaching and support staff. The school has remained a central institution in the town of Orangeville since 1884, despite a tragic fire that destroyed the building in 1948.

The halls of the school have been home to thousands of students throughout its 125 years and will remain a central part of Orangeville and district's unique identity.

Congratulations to the stellar staff at ODSS on 125 tremendous years.

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[*Translation*]

### GUY LALIBERTÉ

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, our man is in space. The founder of Cirque du Soleil has once again shown himself to be a worthy ambassador for Quebec's culture and know-how, bestowing a great honour on the whole Quebec nation by pushing back the limits of imagination and creativity.

His action is all the more significant since he will have to orchestrate, from the international space station, a worldwide artistic event on behalf of his foundation, *One Drop*. The foundation seeks to raise public awareness regarding access to clean drinking water. Let us hope that this event will inspire the government in the fight against poverty, which is directly related to this issue.

On behalf of all Bloc Québécois members, I offer our support to this great Quebecer, and urge everyone to follow this worldwide artistic event on October 9, because it will send a message of peace and hope.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Liberal leader instructed his party to vote against our government's bill to help long-tenured workers. The bill provides extra weeks of EI to Canadians who have worked hard and paid premiums for years, while they look for new employment.

*Statements by Members*

Voting against this bill is further proof the Liberals do not care about the unemployed. In fact, the Liberal leader could not even be bothered to show up for the vote. He should be ashamed.

• (1410)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The member for Kitchener Centre should know that it is improper to make reference to the presence or absence of members in the House, as he has done in his remarks. I would urge him to refrain from such comments.

**Mr. Stephen Woodworth:** Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on what matters to Canadians, our economic recovery, getting Canadians back to work and helping those hardest hit.

In contrast, the Liberal leader wants to force an unnecessary and opportunistic election. The Liberal leader needs to explain to Canadians why he is against the unemployed and why he is fighting our economic recovery.

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, amid our domestic preoccupations, we often lose sight of the international suffering around us.

In the Philippines, unprecedented flooding has caused a humanitarian disaster. I extend my sympathy and support to the Filipino community in my riding and beyond.

In Sri Lanka, hundreds of thousands of Tamils suffer in camps for the displaced, eclipsed from the international radar, while NGOs and journalists are silenced and imprisoned.

In Burma, we witness crimes against humanity against the Burmese people, as attested to by the distinguished Burmese delegation here today, whom we assure of action on their behalf.

In Iran, we witness the innocent under assault and the criminalization of innocence, for which Canadians Maziar Bahari and Zahra Kazemi are both metaphor and message.

We will not be silent and indifferent. We will act and prevail.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in Montreal last Sunday, many people, including Conservative Party members from Quebec and Manitoba, took part in a march to stop the trafficking of children. Who stood out, by their absence? The members of the Bloc Québécois. Not one of its 49 members attended to support the cause of children who are victimized, not even the members from Montreal.

Since the introduction of Bill C-268 against human trafficking, the Bloc members have systematically sided with the rights of criminals. Their party leader says over and over again that he only votes in the interest of Quebec. Imagine that. They continued to vote against this bill. So, for the Bloc, voting in favour of Bill C-268 is not in the interest of Quebec, and even less in the interest of Quebec's children, who are the future of our nation.

By choosing to vote for the rights of criminals instead of showing compassion for children who are the victims of human trafficking, the Bloc leader and his members are clearly showing where their priorities lie.

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**RICHARD WACKID**

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with much sadness that I acknowledge the passing of Richard Wackid, long-time assistant to the Liberal whip.

Beyond what happens in front of the cameras, political parties work together, and Rick and I often worked together. His knowledge of the machinery of Parliament was impressive.

This Parliament depends on the trust we have in our colleagues and we could always trust Richard.

[*English*]

We also knew that Richard had a life outside Parliament. He was a family person. He enjoyed downhill skiing and playing golf.

When he was diagnosed with ALS last summer, we were devastated and in disbelief that this could happen to someone so full of life and vigour.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I want to extend our deepest condolences to Richard's wife, his daughter and his colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Richard, we are going to miss your quick wit and your mischievous smile. Rest in peace my friend.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, the International Monetary Fund released its world economic outlook. It is a report card on the global economy. The report states that Canada will be the fastest growing G7 economy next year.

This proves what we have been saying all along. Canada has been better positioned than most countries to weather the global recession. However, the recovery remains fragile and we must stay the course to continue to implement our economic action plan.

Shockingly, the Liberal leader proves he does not care about those hardest hit by the recession, as he voted against the home renovation tax credit. Earlier this week, his party voted against measures that would help hundreds of thousands of unemployed Canadians. How did the Liberal leader vote on that? He did not.

Our government's number one priority is the economy. The Liberal leader's priority is to force an unnecessary election that would halt our recovery. This proves he is not in it for Canadians; he is in it for himself.

•(1415)

[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL SENIORS DAY

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity on International Seniors Day to acknowledge the contribution seniors make to society and the fine values they pass on. The Bloc Québécois has always had the utmost respect for those who paved the way. I would like to take this opportunity to remind hon. members of the importance of providing better living conditions to the thousands of financially vulnerable seniors.

That is why we continue to call on the Conservative government to take action on the guaranteed income supplement. In addition to full retroactivity of the money the claimants were deprived of, we continue to call for a \$110 monthly increase in benefits, automatic registration of persons 65 and older who are entitled to this supplement and continued payments for a period of six months for a bereaved spouse.

We denounce the government's inaction on this matter, which is depriving thousands of seniors living below the poverty line of better living conditions.

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[English]

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister claimed that in Canada we have no history of colonialism.

Canada in fact has a history of dispossessing aboriginal peoples of land and resources. We have a history of denying public services most Canadians take for granted. We have a history of using aboriginal people, such as in the high Arctic relocation. And Canada has a history of assimilation, of denigrating aboriginal spirituality, language and culture.

We may never have had an empire, but it is historical revisionism to deny Canada's own form of colonialism. It denies decades of progress that first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have made. It frustrates efforts to build on that progress. It undermines the historic residential schools apology.

Our party has acknowledged that history. Aboriginal peoples have lived this history.

The Prime Minister should stop denying reality, live in the truth and work honestly with all aboriginal people for a better tomorrow.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARDS

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this year we are celebrating the 80th anniversary of the Person's Case. On Thursday, the following six exceptional Canadians will receive a Governor General's Award:

#### Oral Questions

[English]

Jeanette Corbiere Lavell for advancing the cause of aboriginal women;

[Translation]

Daphne E. Dumont, for her work on women's rights in the legal system.

Bev LeFrancois, for her work in the area of violence against women here and abroad.

Karen Messing, for her work on women's autonomization in the workplace.

[English]

Mary Scott, for women's information sharing and network building; and Youth Award recipient Pauline Fogarty, for being a leader to many young Canadians.

[Translation]

We salute these exceptional women who are an inspiration to all Canadians. We are proud of these women.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

#### GOVERNMENT POLICIES

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has a government that does not believe in government, that is not protecting today's jobs, that is not creating the jobs of tomorrow, that does not protect technologies made in Canada, that does not protect the health of the most vulnerable and that does not protect our health care system when it is attacked in the United States.

When will this government admit that its ideology is to weaken the Government of Canada's ability to protect Canadians?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader is looking for a reason to trigger an election no one wants.

It is clear that on the issue of unemployment, for example, this government is taking action. We have introduced Bill C-50, which is very important for this country's unemployed workers.

I encourage the opposition leader and his party to support these important benefit increases for unemployed workers, instead of voting in favour of a needless, costly election.

•(1420)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve better. They want a government that reflects their values, the values of mutual help and compassion.

They want a government that understands the words "compromise", "collaboration", "cooperation" and "respect".

They want a government that unites Canadians instead of dividing them.

*Oral Questions*

Why has this government so abused Canadians' trust?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this country has a government. This country just elected a government that is taking action on the economy. It needs an opposition with alternatives to offer.

I invite the Leader of the Opposition to present those alternatives, if he really has any, so that we can debate them in the House, instead of triggering an election no one wants.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a government that will focus on their needs, give them hope and help them build for the future and yet we have a government—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor. I know the Prime Minister wants to be able to hear the question.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that side of the House is convinced of the proposition. We certainly are not.

That is a government that uses every opportunity to treat its adversaries as enemies, every opportunity to sow division for partisan gains, and every opportunity to use public money to spread untruths.

How can Canadians continue to have confidence in that government?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again the Leader of the Opposition is flailing around trying to justify an election that nobody wants for a reason nobody understands on a policy that nobody has heard of.

This government has important measures before the House, tax measures to help the Canadian economy, to help homeowners and the population. It has important measures before the House to help the unemployed and help workers in this country.

I would encourage the Leader of the Opposition and his party, rather than trying to create a needless and unnecessary election, to work with us on these policies, or at least suggest some alternatives we can debate.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is the worst recession in more than 70 years. At a time like this, it does not matter where people live, what party represents them. They are Canadians and they need help, so government money goes where the need is greatest, except it has not. It has gone far more to Conservative ridings, far more.

Does a person, a Canadian living in a Liberal, Bloc or NDP riding suffer less by losing his or her job? Confidence? No. At a time like this, Mr. Speaker, how could they?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if any Canadian is looking for work and cannot find it, it is simply unacceptable. Job creation,

economic development, tax measures and infrastructure spending are all designed to help each and every Canadian who needs a hand up.

I want to say very directly to the member opposite that one of the largest infrastructure projects this government is supporting, and on which work has started this year with more than \$660 million of public resources, of federal money, is in his own constituency. It is the Spadina subway expansion.

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is not the point. The point is how much each riding receives compared to others and how much, given the needs of the people living in that riding. That is the test, the only test.

How could the Conservatives play games at this moment, when people are most vulnerable, when they need their government most? How could they, Mr. Speaker? How could they?

● (1425)

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell him the point. I will tell him the point of the investments we are making in Windsor, Ontario. It has one of the highest per capita unemployment rates in the country. One of the highest per capita infrastructure stimulus grants is being made in that community.

I will tell him about Sault Ste. Marie, a community that is really suffering. The Prime Minister announced more than \$47 million of federal infrastructure spending to give a shot in the arm to that local economy.

I will tell him about the people in Newfoundland and Labrador who are struggling like everyone else in this global economic recession. This government gave full per capita formula funding to that province, because we want to instill hope and opportunity in every corner of that province.

If the Liberals will not do that, they should step aside and let this team get the job done.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**TAX HARMONIZATION**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when people ask the Prime Minister about harmonizing the GST, he says that he is negotiating in good faith. But that is not true. We know that negotiations between Quebec and Ottawa have reached a stalemate because Ottawa is refusing to compensate Quebec unless it agrees to give the federal government the right to collect the GST and the QST.

Quebec signed an agreement to harmonize the GST in 1992. Does the Prime Minister realize that by adding new conditions to the agreement, he is basically renegeing on what the Conservative government signed at the time?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, this government respects the agreement that was signed a long time ago with a previous government. We pay Quebec every year to administer the federal GST. Now Quebec is asking for a completely different agreement, an agreement, I presume, like that with other provinces, and we are negotiating the terms of such an agreement in good faith.



*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what Quebec wants is to be compensated like the Maritimes were to the tune of \$1 billion, like Ontario is being compensated to the tune of \$4.3 billion, and like British Columbia will be to the tune of \$1.6 billion. That is what Quebec wants.

Why is he reneging on the 1992 agreement? Everyone considered that agreement to be a kind of standard. How can he talk about open federalism? How can he say that he respects the Quebec nation when he is prepared to tear up an agreement that everyone looked to as a standard?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, some provinces have signed contracts with the Government of Canada to harmonize the GST. All of these contracts, except for Quebec's, are the same. The terms of Quebec's contract are completely different. We are working toward a contract that is the same as those with other provinces, and I hope that we will achieve that in our negotiations with the Government of Quebec.

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**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, harmonization of the GST is just another issue on which Quebec is being unfairly penalized by the Conservative government. Let us not forget about the loss of \$1 billion in revenue from equalization payments and the loss of \$800 million for post-secondary education. Quebec has been deprived of a total of over \$8 billion because of the Conservatives' neglect.

What is the government waiting for, to settle these disputes and finally give Quebec its due?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind this House that the fiscal imbalance arose under a Liberal government, when the Bloc's parent company, the PQ, was in power in Quebec.

Since we came to power, we have resolved the fiscal imbalance and transfers to Quebec have increased substantially.

If the Bloc still wants to minimize that to cause trouble, it can go ahead, but one thing is certain: we will be building a better federation for Quebecers.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, here is another example: Ontario is receiving billions of dollars from the federal government for its auto industry while our forestry industry, which is in crisis, is getting crumbs. Ontario is being compensated for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST, but not Quebec.

Does this inequitable treatment of Quebec not explain why Quebecers have no confidence in this government?

• (1430)

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would again point out that the government of Quebec itself said that the tax was not fully harmonized and that there were still adjustments to be made. So the other side of the House should stop engaging in disinformation.

As well, the Premier of Quebec himself said again this morning that transfers to Quebec had risen by 60%. Can anything be more

tangible, more concrete, than that? Those are numbers, not just smoke.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons voted last year to have all troops out of Kandahar by 2011, but now we hear hints from the Minister of National Defence that the troops may stay in Afghanistan longer.

It is now the established practice in the House that there be a vote in the House of Commons on the deployment of Canadian troops. Does the Prime Minister believe that he can keep troops in Afghanistan beyond 2011 without a vote in the House authorizing such a deployment?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear that it was this government that brought in the practice that military deployments have to be approved by the House of Commons.

The position of the government is clear. The military mission in Afghanistan will end in 2011. I have said it here and I have said it across the country. In fact, I think I said it recently in the White House.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of National Defence told the House that the government is cooperating with the investigations of the Military Police Complaints Commission, but nothing could be further from the truth.

The government has not provided one single document or allowed one single witness to speak since January of last year. A diplomat, Richard Colvin, wants to testify before the commission about torture in Afghan prisons, but the Conservatives are barring him.

Why will the Prime Minister not allow Mr. Colvin to testify? Does he have something to hide here?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as is so often the case, the leader of the New Democratic Party has his facts completely wrong.

The Government of Canada has been cooperating with the Military Police Complaints Commission. We have provided dozens of witnesses who have testified already. We will continue to cooperate. We have provided thousands of documents that have also been entered into testimony.

With respect to Mr. Colvin, he was on a witness list that was compiled before the Federal Court had ruled in favour of the federal government, limiting this complaint commission to the mandate that is set out in the National Defence Act. Those are the facts and he should read the facts.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in other words, they do not want to hear from Mr. Colvin. That seems pretty clear.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

If the government really wants to help the Military Police Complaints Commission, it has to allow it to operate independently. By preventing people like Richard Colvin from testifying, the government is doing the opposite. We are talking about torture! Since January, they have refused to provide documents. Since January, they have refused to allow people to testify.

Mr. Colvin is an exceptional witness. Why is the government trying to muzzle him?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will say again that the member is wrong. The government and the members of the Canadian Force in particular cooperate fully with the commission.

[English]

It is clear that we are complying with the mandate of the commission itself. It is also clear that this is set out in federal legislation. It is set out in the National Defence Act. It is set out by the Federal Court. This is not politically motivated. There is no political interference. This is done by an arm's-length commission.

I know that the hon. member has never been part of a government. He may not understand that, but this is an arm's-length process and we are respecting that process.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FORESTRY INDUSTRY**

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I was in Trois-Rivières. I met with forestry workers who have lost their jobs or fear they may lose them in the near future. They are very angry that this government refuses to do anything to help their industry and to save their jobs.

Is it because the Conservatives gave \$1 billion to our American competitors as part of the softwood lumber sellout that they no longer have any money to support the Canadian industry?

● (1435)

**Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course we are concerned about what is happening to pulp and paper workers, and we are closely following what is going on. However, executives at Kruger said that the company would close its doors because of a large drop in market share. This is unfortunately due to the global economic crisis, and we will continue to support these people.

The only way the Liberals supported the forestry industry was to abandon forestry workers from 2000 to 2006, and to not have an agreement with the Americans, our main economic partners. Our government is fixing this, and we will continue to support them.

\* \* \*

**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the riding of Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, job losses

continue with no apparent end in sight. Many of my fellow citizens are losing their livelihoods.

Pratt & Whitney Canada will be closing a plant in a few months. The 160 jobs eliminated on the south shore are in addition to 200 others announced yesterday.

For more than a year we have been calling on the government to produce an aerospace action plan. Can the minister explain his blatant lack of action?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. The job losses announced are unfortunate, of course, and the government is concerned about the impact on the employees and their families.

However, these layoffs are due mainly to the closing in the next few years of plant no. 2, which is 85 years old and located in Longueuil. The activities will be transferred, however, to other leading Pratt & Whitney facilities on the south shore.

\* \* \*

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week the Prime Minister misled Canadians about his government's record on creating jobs. His slick report and his advertising campaign are already costing at least \$34 million and use words like "announcements", "commitments" and "promises", but leave out the one thing that matters. What jobs did the government create for Canadians who are out of work?

The Prime Minister and his government have had eight months and \$8 billion to deliver on their promise of 190,000 jobs for Canadians.

How many jobs has his government actually created with the infrastructure stimulus funds?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** The plan, Mr. Speaker, as announced in the economic action plan in the House on January 27, estimated the creation and preservation of about 190,000 jobs in Canada.

We are doing better than that. As I reported to the House earlier this week in our government's third report this year to Canadians, the job figure now is about 220,000, not 190,000 and that is—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, he has the same problem as the minister before him.

He says 220,000 jobs next year, not right now. In fact, the Prime Minister and his ministers have been deliberately hiding the truth. The job creation program is a colossal failure.

There is a list to tell the public the truth when it comes to job creation with infrastructure spending.

We spoke directly to 946 announced projects. At the very most, the government has created fewer than 160 jobs per week at the very same time that 5,800 more Canadians have lost their job each week.

Why did the Conservatives use taxpayer money as a slush fund—

*Oral Questions*

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Minister of Finance. Order.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the official opposition wanted these reports to Canadians. I suggest the member for Parkdale—High Park might want to read them. Then he would understand where the 220,000 jobs are being preserved and created during the course of the economic action plan.

Not only that but in work sharing about 165,000 Canadians are profiting, making use of the work-sharing program so that their jobs are preserved during this recession.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Pratt & Whitney announced the closure of a plant in Longueuil, which means that 160 workers will be laid off by the end of 2010. These job losses are in addition to the approximately 500 layoffs in Quebec that the company has announced this year. The aerospace industry is to Quebec what the automobile industry is to Ontario.

When will the federal government decide to support Quebec too and adopt a real aerospace policy?

• (1440)

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, Pratt & Whitney's real investment in Quebec over the next few years is expected to exceed \$500 million. That is a 10% increase. That is not bad.

In addition, our government has supported the aerospace sector and has doubled the strategic initiatives in it. We support all the investments, like those Pratt & Whitney is making along with other companies.

**Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec's aerospace industry needs assistance in order to remain competitive. It needs a predictable program with research, accessible support for small and medium-size companies, and a regional spin-off policy reflecting the fact that Quebec accounts for 60% of the industry.

Why help Ontario's automobile industry but refuse to help Quebec's aerospace industry, which is an industry of the future?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is totally false. There is an announcement in Montreal for CAE and other aerospace companies.

We have a strategy for this industry. In the 2008 budget, we announced more than \$5 billion in additional spending for research and development all across Canada.

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**LABOUR**

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour says that pregnant women may take advantage of preventive withdrawal in federally regulated businesses. The salary, however, for the two groups of women is not the same, since Quebec's CSST

pays 90% of an employee's salary, whereas there is nothing like this for women working under the Canada Labour Code.

Does the minister realize that this salary difference creates two classes of female citizens in Quebec?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I made it clear yesterday that, when a woman feels, whatever the point, that her health and safety or that of her fetus are at risk because of a health problem, including the H1N1 virus, she is entitled under the law to refuse to go to work. She will continue to be paid until a decision is taken.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that is valid until a physician says yes or no, which could be in an hour or a day.

The minister must know that some Quebec employees working under the Canada Labour Code are covered against all occupational injuries and diseases under the CSST.

What is keeping the Conservatives from reaching an agreement with the Government of Quebec to allow pregnant women working under the Canada Labour Code to enjoy real preventive withdrawal?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Labour, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear again.

If a woman at any time feels that her health and safety or the health and safety of her unborn child is at risk due to any health issue including the H1N1 virus, she has the right under the law to refuse to go to work and continue to be paid until a determination is made.

The labour program is working with the Public Health Agency and the provinces, including the province of Quebec, to examine this issue.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's scheme for allocating infrastructure stimulus funds is a stunning example of political favouritism.

In B.C., Conservative ridings received an average of \$9.3 million compared to \$2.2 million for opposition ridings. Because there are no Conservatives, the entire City of Vancouver received barely half a million dollars.

Will the government listen to municipalities, stop its patronage and provide funding and jobs fairly to all British Columbians?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have set aside \$70 million of federal support that will help leverage about \$200 million of infrastructure investment in the City of Vancouver proper. We are waiting to get sufficient details from the city so we can move forward.

*Oral Questions*

I note that the Liberal math is quite interesting. Yesterday the Liberal Party said there were 135 projects in British Columbia approved, and in fact we have approved 308. They said it was only \$283 million, and in fact we approved more than \$740 million worth of projects.

When it comes to British Columbia, does this side of the House deliver for B.C. in a way B.C. has never received support before? I can categorically say yes.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

**2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES**

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, here is another embarrassing example of crass politics.

The logo on the 2010 Canadian Olympic retail apparel was released today, and it bears a striking resemblance to the logo of a certain political party.

Canada's Olympic Games belong to all Canadians. While it is clear that the Conservative government's multi-million dollar infrastructure campaign is crassly partisan, could the Prime Minister at least stop trying to politicize the Canadian Winter Olympic Games?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of State (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that no one in the Government of Canada was involved in any way, shape or form in the design of any of the Olympic clothing. In fact the first time I saw it was yesterday.

The clothing was designed by the Hudson's Bay Company in consultations with the Canadian Olympic Committee and with an athletes' panel.

I would remind the hon. member and her party that last week they were attacking Tim Hortons and this week they are attacking the Hudson's Bay Company. Why do they not support our athletes while they are training to win gold at home and make each and every one of us very proud in every corner of our country?

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**HEALTH**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday while Liberals were doing what the Prime Minister should have done, defending Canadian health care in Washington, Republican Senator Corker called Canada parasitic.

Will the Prime Minister denounce Senator Corker's reprehensible characterization of our country?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a health care system that all Canadians can be proud of.

We recognize there is always need for improvement. We are committed to working with the provinces and the territories to ensure that our system provides high-quality health care for all Canadians.

I would like to read a quote:

Keep Canada out of the U.S. debate...and hope our friends in the U.S. will find their own answers to the questions that lie at the heart of [their] health care.

Who said that? The member for Toronto Centre.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is simple. It is about standing up for our health care system when it is under attack from right-wing Republican ideologues, those very same ideologues that the Prime Minister said he admired.

When will the Prime Minister or anyone from the Conservative Party finally begin to defend and promote Canada's most cherished social program, our health care system?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, this government is committed to providing support to the provinces and territories, which is why we have continued to increase the transfers to the provinces and territories in the last year by 6%.

We now have \$24 billion being transferred to provinces. I will continue to work with the provincial and territorial health systems to ensure that we are responding to Canadians' needs.

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**TYPHOON KETSANA**

**Mr. Rod Bruinoog (Winnipeg South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is making available up to \$5 million for emergency and humanitarian assistance because of typhoon Ketsana.

Many Canadians, particularly members of the Filipino-Canadian community are worried about their relatives still in the Philippines who have been affected by this terrible typhoon.

Could the minister of immigration tell us what he is doing to help alleviate their worries?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure all of our prayers are with those affected by the terrible typhoon Ketsana in Southeast Asia.

I am pleased to announce that effective immediately, immigration officials will begin expediting applications from individuals directly and significantly affected by the typhoon.

The special measures I am announcing include priority processing for new and existing family class applications from the Philippines for individuals affected by the typhoon. Their applications will be put to the front of the queue. In addition, Canadian visa officers will also be prioritizing temporary resident applications from Filipino nationals who can demonstrate that they are negatively affected by the typhoon.

In addition to our generous aid contribution, we are doing what we can to stand by the people of the Philippines.

\* \* \*

● (1450)

**HARMONIZED SALES TAX**

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is the first day of October and in northern Ontario, indeed across the province, it is getting colder. However, what is really giving people the chills in this province is the government's HST scheme. The recession has hit families across northern Ontario hard and now the government wants to slap them with an extra 8% tax on their heating bill.

*Oral Questions*

Would the minister explain to the families in this province why he is pushing the new tax and leaving them out in the cold?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, several Canadian provinces chose to harmonize their sales taxes some years ago. A couple of others have decided now to do that; Quebec is interested in doing that as well.

What I do not understand with the position of the NDP is that their finance critic says we have to hurry up and harmonize fully with Quebec, and at the same time says there ought not to be harmonization with Ontario and with British Columbia.

Perhaps the member for the NDP can explain that contradiction to the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy he asked the question. The Conservatives like regressive taxation, which hits the most disadvantaged the hardest. That is the problem. In the case of Quebec, this has already been done and it is owed money.

According to the Conservative tape, the negotiations with Quebec are moving right along. However, according to the information published yesterday by Jean-Marc Salvé in *Le Soleil*, they are at a standstill. Although my question is simple, it requires them to press the pause button on their tape recorder.

Will Quebec be getting the \$2.6 billion due it because Quebec has already harmonized?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I recall, the member for Outremont was in fact a member of the government in Quebec that chose to enter into a harmonization with the Government of Canada at the time.

Now he says the Ontario government is wrong to harmonize, the British Columbia government is wrong to harmonize, and Quebec should have full harmonization.

What is this inconsistency? What is this lack of understanding of the process that the provincial governments follow, including the government that he was part of?

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the office of the Minister of State (Science and Technology) threatened to cut funding to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in order to force the organization to withdraw its financial support for a university conference that was deemed too anti-Israel.

Does the minister understand that the council is an organization designed expressly to avoid political interference in grants to scientists?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for South-**

**ern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the research council in question has clearly stated that the email is inaccurate.

What is accurate is that this government has put \$5.1 billion into science and technology. The Bloc voted against it. What is accurate is that we have increased funding to the SSHRC. The Bloc voted against it. In fact, we just put in \$394 million to Quebec universities, colleges and CEGEPs, and the Bloc voted against it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time this government has suddenly and illogically intervened in university affairs. I would remind the House that grants for the social sciences and humanities have been diverted to applications more in line with conservative values.

Does the Prime Minister understand that he must change his science policy, beginning with his creationist minister?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for South-ern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the member that under this government we have increased SSHRC funding by 20% in three years. Natural sciences and engineering has increased 21% in three years. The NRC's budget is up 13% in three years. We are doing that because we believe in all kinds of science, from beginning to the end, from basic to discovery.

The member wants to explain to the House why he voted against \$1.4 million to CEGEP de Granby for knowledge infrastructure. Why are those members voting against help for scientists and students in their own province?

\* \* \*

● (1455)

[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while seasonal workers have been going through a crisis for a number of years already, the Conservative government and the NDP are excluding them outright, instead of making them eligible for the 20 additional weeks of EI benefits.

On Monday, here in the House of Commons, the Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism said, while referring to employment insurance, that the extra weeks of benefits would go to those who deserved them.

Does the Prime Minister too find that seasonal workers do not deserve these 20 additional weeks of EI benefits?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know that many Canadians were affected by this global recession. But here in Canada, we are dealing mostly with people who have worked, who have paid EI premiums and taxes for years, and who have never collected benefits, or hardly ever. It is often these people who have the hardest time finding a new job. That is why they need our help and we are providing that help. I would like to see the Liberals recognize that.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, seasonal workers too have paid premiums and taxes all their lives.

Whether it is seasonal workers in the forestry, tourism, fishing, agriculture, highway or construction sector, whether it is new graduates or mothers going back to work, why do the Conservatives and the NDP not want these people to have access to additional weeks of benefits? Why are the Conservatives saying that these people do not deserve these extra weeks? What do they have against workers? What do they have against the taxpayers of our country?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have already announced and delivered five extra weeks for all workers in Canada, up to a new maximum of 50 weeks per claim.

[English]

We have delivered an extra five weeks for all workers across Canada and increased the maximum to 50 weeks per claim. That is a big improvement.

We are also trying to help those who have been hardest hit by this global recession with a hand up while it takes them longer to get back to work. We are there for them, and we wish the Liberals—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

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**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a fundraiser for the natural resources minister was organized from the president's office of the Toronto Port Authority, and the minister's former executive assistant sent out invitations and collected the names, all on the taxpayer's dime.

Using a public agency for a political fundraiser is an abuse of the public trust. Has Janet MacDonald performed other political activities in the past and does the minister know of this abuse, or is this a standard Conservative fundraising practice?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, government resources, resources of taxpayers, of the agencies, boards and commissions of the government, are not to be used for political fundraising. Such practices are totally inappropriate and totally unacceptable.

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**TORONTO PORT AUTHORITY**

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, recently the Minister of Transport appointed Robert Poirier to the port authority. Mr. Poirier is a generous Conservative donor who organized yet another fundraiser, this one for the industry minister, at \$1,000 a plate.

Other board members include Craig Rix and Jeremy Adams, both former staff of the Harris Conservative government. No wonder Torontonians call it “the pork authority”.

When will the Prime Minister disband the board and return the port and the waterfront to the good people of Toronto?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the basis of the member's concern about the Toronto Port Authority is that it operates an airport. She does not want the airport to be there. The people of Toronto and the people of Canada have shown overwhelmingly that they want the airport to be there. This government supports the airport being there. There is an honest difference of opinion on that.

Let me tell members why it is a good thing that airport is there. Not only is it providing support to a lot of commuters in the city of Toronto and across the country, but the airline that operates out of there is buying good Bombardier technology, Bombardier airplanes built right in the city of Toronto, and that is creating a lot of jobs for Canadian auto workers.

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● (1500)

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the Liberal leader steams toward forcing an unnecessary and opportunistic election, he constantly distorts facts to take down the Canadian economy and the workers and businesses that fuel it.

He twists figures to preach doom, mocking Canada's economic performance on the world stage, all for his own personal scheme to force an election. Canadians deserve better than a Liberal leader who would jeopardize our fragile economic recovery for self-interest.

Could the Minister of Finance please inform the Liberal leader what the IMF said today?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberal leader talks down the economy, we have created a plan that is stimulating the economy, creating jobs, cutting taxes and much more. It is a plan that is getting results, putting Canada in one of the strongest positions.

The IMF said today that not only will Canada experience one of the smallest drops of G7 countries in 2009, but Canada will be the fastest growing economy among G7 countries in 2010.

Canada is coming through this economic recession stronger than other G7 countries. That is what the IMF said about our great country today.

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**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

It appears that the Minister of Natural Resources knowingly put herself in a conflict of interest by using a registered lobbyist to organize her political financing and that she was in breach of the code of ethical conduct for ministers by using the resources and private information of the federally regulated Toronto Port Authority to promote her political financing.

Will the Prime Minister be requesting investigations by the Ethics Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying and by the Chief Electoral Officer, and if not, why not?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said in response to a question a few moments ago from the New Democratic Party, government resources, those of taxpayers, of agencies, boards and commissions, are not to be used for partisan political fundraising. That practice is wrong. It is totally unacceptable and it is totally inappropriate, and that has been communicated in no uncertain terms.

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[Translation]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of the Environment said that U.S. Senators Boxer and Kerry introduced a bill with the same target as in the bill passed in Canada two years ago. Not only is the minister misleading us, because Canadian targets are based only on intensity targets, but he is forgetting that the Conservative government has not introduced a shred of legislation on climate change.

With less than 100 days to go until the Copenhagen conference, can the Minister of the Environment tell us when he is going to introduce enforceable legislation on climate change?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government will make sure that our policies protect the environment without compromising our economic recovery.

Our economic reality demands that our environmental policies be harmonized with those of the United States. The Americans have just adopted a vehicle emissions standard similar to ours. This week they are proposing targets identical to Canada's. This concrete collaboration illustrates our commitment to the environment.

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#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, I asked the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development a question about one of their election promises.

I asked her to show us her plan to extend EI benefits to self-employed workers. This is a priority for the NDP.

The minister responded, and I quote, "We made this promise and we are going to deliver the goods."

I have a simple question for the minister. When does she expect to deliver the goods?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. We

#### Oral Questions

made that promise. We will deliver the goods, and when we do so, I hope that the NDP will support us.

\* \* \*

• (1505)

[English]

#### SENIORS

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today is the United Nations International Day of Older Persons. It is a day to stop and appreciate the contributions that Canadian seniors have made to this country, to our communities and to our families. Seniors built this great country.

Our Conservative government has a strong record when it comes to supporting Canadian seniors. Can the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development please remind the House of some of the great things our government is doing to help seniors?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that Canada's seniors did build this country and they raised our families, and our Conservative government is listening to them. That is why we created a minister of state and a seniors council, to listen to their issues.

As a result of that, we have taken concrete steps so that seniors can keep more of their hard-earned money in their own pockets. From pension income splitting to increasing the age credit, twice, to increasing the GIS exemption from \$500 to \$3,500, we are standing up for our seniors.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy that Canada has moved so quickly to help countries in need through the World Food Programme.

But as I have been saying since February, francophone African countries such as Burkina Faso and Burundi, which are among the least developed countries in the world, also need our help.

Can the minister tell us when her government will act to help these francophone African countries, as it has helped other countries?

[English]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government is responding to all of those in need. In fact, we have made contributions through the World Food Programme, particularly directed to the francophone countries that are being affected by the disasters.

We have addressed many of the urgent needs. We are aware and we continue to monitor the situation.

*Points of Order***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the six recipients of the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case: Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, Daphne Dumont, Bev LeFrancois, Karen Messing, Mary Scott and Pauline Fogarty.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, should the NDP continue to sustain the Conservative government through the votes tonight and if we are still sitting tomorrow and next week, could the government House leader indicate what he plans in terms of the work program for that period of time?

Also, in light of the deadline that will be approaching in less than a week's time with respect to the amendment to the NAFO agreement, would he reconsider and provide time between now and the end of next week for a take note debate on the NAFO issue?

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, in response to the last point raised by my hon. colleague, we discussed this between us earlier. I indicated to him then that we believed opposition days were the appropriate time to hold such debates. Indeed, today would have been a great opportunity to have the debate about the fisheries industry. I would think that it should have been done today rather than try to bring forward an opposition motion to force an unnecessary election onto Canadians. That is what we have been spending all day debating.

In reply to the fact that if our government does survive this reckless and unnecessary motion that the official opposition has brought forward today and the House were to continue, then obviously today we will continue to debate the opposition motion.

Tomorrow, provided the opposition motion of today is defeated, we will begin debate on Bill C-51, the second budget implementation bill, which has all sorts of great things in it to help Canadians even further.

Following that, we will schedule for debate Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, Bill C-37, the national capital act and Bill C-44, the Canada Post Corporation Act. All these bills are at second reading and have a long way to go.

We will continue with this lineup of economic legislation next week and add to the list any bills that are reported back from committee.

If I could, I would like to end this week's reply to the Thursday question by paying tribute to someone who I considered a very close personal friend.

It was little more than a year ago, July 2008, while in my riding, that I received an email from Rick Wackid explaining he had been diagnosed with ALS. The news hit like a blow below the belt. That a young man, so healthy, so active and so full of life could leave us so quickly serves as a wake-up call to all of us of how fragile our existence can be.

Although Rick Wackid, like Jerry Yanover, was always a very worthy political adversary, he was also a passionate believer in this, our House of democracy. When one party loses someone of his quality and integrity, we are all the poorer for it. He is and will continue to be greatly missed.

On behalf of the Prime Minister and our entire Conservative government, I offer my sincere condolences to Rick's wife Danielle, his daughter Stephanie and all of his friends and family.

\* \* \*

● (1510)

**POINTS OF ORDER**

COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR NOTRE-DAME-DE-GRÂCE—LACHINE

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw to your attention that at approximately 12:40 p.m. during debate, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine on two separate occasions accused government members of lying. Clearly, in anyone's definition, this is unparliamentary language. I would ask you to review the blues and make a ruling on this matter as quickly as possible.

To her credit, the member said that if these remarks are deemed to be unparliamentary she would gladly apologize. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to make a ruling quickly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask you once again, further to a previous point of order I made, to make a ruling in an expeditious manner on what I believe to be unparliamentary remarks offered by the member for Wascana, on June 10 of this year, when during question period he stated to the Minister of Natural Resources that "she cannot tell the truth".

Although we all know that the member for Wascana offered a very tepid apology on September 18, approximately five minutes before the House adjourned for a week, he did not qualify what he was apologizing for or what remarks he was withdrawing.

In order to have the decorum that we want, and I think all members want in the House, we need clear direction from you, Mr. Speaker, as to whether that language used during question period on June 10 was unparliamentary, since we have no clear direction of that yet.

I would urge you to please consider my intervention once again, Mr. Speaker, and make a ruling as quickly as possible.

COMMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR NOTRE-DAME-DE-GRÂCE—LACHINE

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the first point of order raised by the parliamentary secretary. I simply want to say that I said every member of the Conservative Party was repeating a lie. Mr. Speaker, should you rule that it was unparliamentary language for me to say that the Conservatives were knowingly repeating something they knew to be untrue and therefore were repeating a lie, I will apologize with no reservations.



*Speaker's Ruling*

**The Speaker:** I can assure the hon. member that it is unparliamentary to suggest that members are lying or deliberately telling an untruth. Therefore, she might properly withdraw the remark and we will solve this problem now.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I properly, wholeheartedly and unreservedly withdraw the statement I made that the Conservatives told a lie and repeated the lie. I apologize with all my heart for having made that statement. I will not repeat it again in the House.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member.

Just to cheer up the parliamentary secretary, I will give the ruling now. I was going to wait, but I will give it now on the other matter.

[Translation]

COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR WASCANA—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** On June 10, 2009, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons raised a point of order with regard to the use of unparliamentary language by the hon. member for Wascana. On September 28, 2009, the hon. parliamentary secretary reiterated his request for a ruling, noting that he did find the withdrawal of the remarks by the hon. member for Wascana on September 18 to be sufficient.

I am now prepared to rule on the point of order concerning unparliamentary language.

• (1515)

[English]

In first raising his point of order, the parliamentary secretary noted that during question period the member for Wascana quite clearly accused the Minister of Natural Resources of not telling the truth, which in his opinion was unparliamentary language.

Making reference to sections of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and Beauchesne's, concerning unparliamentary language, the parliamentary secretary stated that what he found distressing was that the member for Wascana had used this language in a direct question in a deliberate and premeditated mode. He asked that the opposition House leader apologize and withdraw the remarks. He asked that I review the blues of the debates.

In speaking in reply to the point of order, the member for Wascana also asked me to review the blues and argued that he had chosen his language very carefully and that it was not beyond the rules of parliamentary procedure, a position he maintained when he later rose to withdraw his remarks.

I had the opportunity to review the debates of Wednesday, June 10. In his preamble to a supplementary question to the Minister of Natural Resources concerning medical isotopes, the member for Wascana made the following remark, "Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot give the numbers and clearly she cannot tell the truth either". That is on page 4419 of the *Debates*. These comments created disorder in the House and as I pointed out to the member at the time, such comments were unnecessary.

[Translation]

When the point of order was raised, I reviewed the section on unparliamentary language contained in Beauchesne, and I noted that there are a number of expressions that are very close to what was used, but none is precisely the same. I have also looked at other more recent uses of similar language in the House. There are numerous instances where my predecessors and I have had to rule unparliamentary such phrases as the "member deliberately misled", "the member lied", "the member is a liar", or calling on a member to "stop lying". In these cases, the use of such language is clearly unparliamentary.

[English]

Similarly, the use of expressions such as "a member made an untrue statement", "a member did not tell the truth", "the minister did not tell the truth", "a member was not telling the whole truth", have always been considered unacceptable and met with requests from the Speaker to withdraw the remarks. In one instance, on September 25, 1985, in the *Debates* at pages 6955-6, in his question, a member had asked the Prime Minister "to tell the truth to the House of Commons". Mr. Speaker Bosley noted that there was an improper implication to the question and asked the member to rephrase it. Unsatisfied with the rephrasing of the question, the Speaker interrupted the member and stated that making such accusations with regard to the character of a member was improper in the House. He asked the member to withdraw and put a simple question of fact.

[Translation]

As Mr. Speaker Lamoureux stated in a ruling on October 13, 1966, *Debates*, page 8599:

My limited experience in the house indicates that it is not, per se, unparliamentary to say of another member that the statement he makes is false, untrue, wrong, incorrect or even spurious, unless there is an improper motive imputed or unless the member making the charge claims the untruth was stated to the knowledge of the person stating any such alleged untruth. [...]

I do not believe that saying a statement made is spurious is unparliamentary, or that a statement is incorrect, wrong, or untrue, if no motives are imputed by the person making such a statement.

[English]

In his comments, the member for Wascana stated that he had chosen his words very carefully and that it was not beyond the rules of parliamentary procedure. Nevertheless, it appears that in stating that she could not tell the truth, the member for Wascana was challenging the truthfulness of what the minister was saying and the Chair can only conclude that the remarks were unparliamentary.

The Chair notes that the member for Wascana did rise in the House on Friday, September 18 to withdraw the remarks and that the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has since pointed out that this still leaves open the question of whether or not the remarks were or were not unparliamentary. Let me remove all doubt on the matter: the words used were unparliamentary, they have been withdrawn and the Chair considers the matter closed.

[Translation]

I thank the House for its attention.

*Business of Supply*

• (1520)  
[English]

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously I accept your ruling on that particular point. I might not agree with it but I accept it.

However, on a similar point rising out of question period today, I would ask you to review *Hansard* and to rule on the following point. When the member for Parkdale—High Park was asking a question earlier today, he stated, “He has the same problem as the minister before him. He says 220,000 jobs next year, not right now. In fact, the Prime Minister and his ministers have been deliberately hiding the truth”.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to review this and, because he has used the word “deliberately” in connection with the truth, I believe that is unparliamentary and that he should withdraw that.

**The Speaker:** I will be glad to look into the matter. I think I may have heard the words at the time and did not think that hiding the truth was necessarily bad, but I will check the precedents on this point for sure and come back to the House in due course.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The House resumed consideration of the motions.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues on this important motion introduced by the Liberal Party. This motion could be called a non-confidence motion. Its wording is relatively clear since it says that the House has lost confidence in the government.

We Bloc Québécois members agree with Liberal members that this Conservative government can no longer have our confidence, especially the confidence of Quebecers from all regions of Quebec, whom we proudly represent here. I will have the opportunity to explain why this government does not deserve our confidence.

Quebec's motto is, *Je me souviens*, I remember. Sometimes, we may seem to forget things, but Quebecers clearly remember that exactly one year ago, all of us here were actively campaigning. Indeed, the election was held on October 14, 2008. At that time during the campaign, but also after the election, what was the government doing? It was denying the existence of any economic crisis. This Conservative government was telling us that there would be no deficit. Obviously, it misled us. What are we to do when a government misleads the House and the public? We must state that we no longer have confidence in that government.

Even though we, the Bloc Québécois members, support the Liberal motion, we feel that we have in front of us and beside us two parties with the same vision, two different parties but with the same

outlook, two parties, one Liberal and one Conservative, that deliberately ignore the needs of Quebec and its citizens.

As the former Quebec lieutenant—the member for Bourassa—confirmed this week, the Liberal Party is controlled from Toronto. The Bloc Québécois has been saying for a long time that the Liberal Party is controlled by the Bay Street establishment. However, whenever we would say so, the Liberals would accuse us of engaging in doom and gloom and witch-hunting. Yet, the Quebec lieutenant who just resigned confirmed it.

The Liberal Party is controlled out of Toronto, but the Conservative Party is controlled from Calgary, because the decisions affecting that party are made in Calgary.

It can safely be said that in both cases these two parties, which have the same outlook, ignore the interests of Quebecers. The Bloc Québécois is the only party that fights for the interests of Quebecers and of Quebec's regions. That is why, since 1993, Quebec voters have always given a majority of seats to the Bloc Québécois. That is also why each Bloc member works very hard to be present in his or her riding, to be present here in Ottawa, and to listen to people's needs.

The Conservative government is totally out of touch. I am going to provide a few examples.

• (1525)

Consider the sectors of the economy that are in trouble. In Quebec, the manufacturing sector has been hard hit by the current crisis. Yesterday we had the announcements by Pratt & Whitney in the riding of my colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher. The forestry industry has been affected in all regions of Quebec, and even the Montreal region, because there are paper companies that have their head offices in Montreal. There have been cuts in the forestry industry in Montreal. In the regions, we have a genuine disaster.

In my riding, the sawmills owned by Kruger have closed down. There were three sawmills, two in my riding and one in the riding of my colleague from Manicouagan. The main employer in the municipality of Longue-Rive in the Haute-Côte-Nord region, the Jacques Beaulieu sawmill owned by Kruger, has closed down, taking jobs away from 100 people. Those people are experiencing an economic disaster.

Quite recently, on September 17, AbitibiBowater announced that it was eliminating 120 positions at the Clermont plant and also 340 positions in my riding at the Beaupré plant on the Côte-de-Beaupré. And the Saint-Hilarion sawmill, which depends directly on those two pulp and paper plants, is threatened with closure too.

Therefore, it is clear that for the people affected by this crisis, and given the government's inaction, we cannot continue to have confidence in the Conservatives.

*Business of Supply*

We could also recall that in the last Conservative government budget alone the modest sum of \$170 million over two years was allocated to the forestry industry and the manufacturing industry across Canada. At the same time, the auto industry in Ontario was given \$10 billion. That may be why our colleagues in the NDP who represent ridings in the Windsor, Ontario, region are a little lukewarm about our effort to stand up against the inequitable treatment of the forestry industries in Quebec and the auto industry in Ontario.

Another group that has been hit hard and directly by the recession is workers who have suffered job losses. These workers have no choice but to resort to employment insurance. The only action plan presented to the government by one of the opposition parties was proposed by the Bloc Québécois. We presented our first action plan in November 2008, and in February 2009 we attached an addendum to include other elements. The only party that has made the effort of presenting concrete proposals to help families, industries, regions and individuals is the Bloc Québécois.

That is why one of the things we called for in that action plan was for the waiting period to be eliminated. When you are unfortunate enough to find yourself without a job, the credit card bills, the mortgage payments and other everyday expenses, electricity bills, heating bills, whatever, keep coming in. Desjardins is not going to propose that you start paying your mortgage again when you feel like it just because you have lost your job. That is not how it works. That is why we called for the waiting period to be eliminated, to ensure that money continues to be injected into the economy, that people who are waiting for the situation to improve, who are waiting for someone to find another job, can continue to have an income.

I am almost out of time, but I would have also liked to talk about the situation of seniors. Sadly, again, the only party taking up the cause of seniors is the Bloc Québécois. Today, again, there was a question about the guaranteed income supplement, asked by my colleague from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant. Seniors are also experiencing income losses and are having more and more trouble making ends meet.

•(1530)

Some seniors have even reached the point of wondering whether they should eat or buy prescription drugs. That is unbelievable, and it is totally unacceptable. That is why the Conservatives no longer have our confidence.

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech. He did not manage to get to employment insurance in the short amount of time he was allowed.

In Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord and in Manicouagan, we have fishers, forestry workers and seasonal workers in the tourism industry. There are also some people who work in winter or summer, depending on the season. It is as hard to harvest berries on the North Shore in February as to ski on the Massif de la Petite-Rivière-Saint-François in July. These people often find themselves on employment insurance.

The government's Bill C-50 will not help the people of the North Shore.

I would like the hon. member to tell me whether many seasonal, occasional, temporary or vacation replacement workers in his riding and all over Quebec will receive any employment insurance benefits at all under Bill C-50.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

We sometimes tend to speak of seasonal workers when we should call them seasonal industry workers. It is the industry that is seasonal.

As my colleague rightly said, the bill before us will help 190,000 workers across Canada. There is nothing in it, though, for seasonal industry workers, absolutely nothing according to our studies. We asked the government to provide us with a province by province breakdown of these 190,000 workers.

Where can these 190,000 workers be found? The program is tailor-made for workers in the automobile industry in Ontario. I agree they may have been affected, but Bill C-50 does nothing for our seasonal workers. The entire question of eligibility in this employment insurance program should be reviewed. We agree about this with the Sans-Chemise and Action Chômage movements, which want the threshold to qualify for employment insurance reduced to 360 hours.

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, our colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord made a very good speech. I would like to remind him about what is happening now in Quebec, where there is a lot of controversy about the state of public finances and people are starting to realize that we are very short on money.

Our excuse for a premier in Quebec City wants to start increasing everyone's taxes and is thinking of all kinds of things to get money, including raising electricity rates, when the real money is in Ottawa, in the funds owed to Quebec.

My colleague mentioned the oft-cited \$10 billion given to the automobile industry while virtually nothing was given to forestry industry, even though more people have lost jobs there than in the automobile industry.

I would like to tell him and make him realize—I am sure he already knows—that this is a double loss for us because it is money we do not have and because we are paying 20% of the \$10 billion given to Ontario. That means \$2 billion is coming out of our pockets to go there.

I would like to hear what he has to say about that.

•(1535)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord has one minute to answer the question.

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Madam Speaker, that is the problem with the current situation. With this Conservative government, and this was also the case with the Liberals, there is always a double standard. Today, our leader opened question period by talking about harmonization of the GST.

*Business of Supply*

Former Prime Minister Mulroney made an agreement and the current Conservative Prime Minister is refusing to honour that agreement. When the time came to harmonize the GST in Ontario or in the Maritimes, they found the money. But when it comes to Quebec, there is always a different standard that applies.

For that reason, when Quebec is sovereign, we will stop begging Ottawa for what is rightfully ours. Decisions will be made in Quebec, for Quebec. As Maurice Duplessis said, "Give us back our loot." It is our money.

[English]

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my distinguished colleague from Prince Edward Island, the man who probably more than any other member of the House fights for fairness for Canadian farmers, the member for Malpeque.

Today we debate a very concise motion. Its language is simple and its message is direct; unusual for this place, it is stunningly clear and without pretense. It simply states that we do not have confidence in the current government.

We should be clear that this opposition has lacked confidence in the government for some time. However, as a responsible opposition, we have put the country first, tried to work with the government and pressured it to make changes when possible. We have acted responsibly and we have sustained this Parliament. We have not supported the government, but we have sustained it. While others have called for an election on dozens of occasions, we have not. That is not because we have had faith in the government, but because we saw it as our duty to try to make Parliament work. However, that has not been easy.

Since the election of the government in early 2006, we have seen actions and attitudes that we believe are out of line with Canadian values. We have seen disregard for those most vulnerable. We have seen distortions, exaggerations and fabrications. We have seen a government that specializes in dividing Canadians. It sees policies and programs as political chess pieces designed to advance its own cause, not the cause of Canadians. It is a government that has abandoned fairness and compassion, thereby damaging our reputation at home and abroad.

Particularly distressing for me, we have seen a government which in large part has abandoned the social infrastructure of Canada, which had been constructed by Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments over a number of decades. Canadians have watched as we saw cuts to programs, even after directly inheriting the largest surplus in Canadian history.

We have seen programs diverted for political advantage, hurting many in Canada's population who need help the most. We have not supported the government for those reasons, but there have been times when we have sustained the government, allowing Parliament to continue and avoiding an election. Most recently in June, when the NDP and the Bloc voted for an election, Liberals agreed to one last opportunity for the government to show good faith.

As part of the deal, the decision was made to form a group of Liberal and Conservative members whose goal was to look at two specific aspects of employment insurance to see if progress could be

made. EI is not the only issue on which we have lacked confidence in the government, but this is a clear example and a particular interesting case study of why we have lost confidence in the government. I want to go through this summer project, on which I had the honour of working.

On June 17, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition agreed to set up an EI working group, a blue ribbon panel to study EI. There were two issues: regional fairness, the issue which the Leader of the Opposition had insisted on; and bringing self-employed into the employment insurance system, which the government suggested was a priority for itself. On that day, the Leader of the Opposition appointed three panellists, including me and my colleague, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development was appointed on that day, but it took almost two weeks before the other Conservative panellists were appointed.

On June 28, we had a teleconference. We heard that the minister could not meet because she was going away for two weeks. We decided to meet on July 7 for a technical briefing. That had to be changed to accommodate the summer plans of the parliamentary secretary, so we could not meet until July 14. We had a technical briefing on the 14th without the minister.

The Liberals submitted a number of questions to the secretariat that had been set up. We asked what the costing would be for a national qualifying standard of EI based on 360 hours. We also asked what the costing was for 390 hours and 420 hours. We asked about the cost to people of the revolving rate of unemployment, which means that people in some areas who lose their jobs before others in that area lose their jobs do not qualify for EI.

We talked about the extension of weeks benefit, citing the United States model. The member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine mentioned the United States model and what was happening in states such as California, where EI was being extended. We asked for information on the self-employed.

Members should keep in mind that the first full meeting could not be held on June 17 because of the Conservative members. It could not be held until July 23, when we had a meeting.

Although we had agreed in advance that all information would be provided in advance, it was not. We got the information at the meeting. In the discussion I had with the minister, the Liberals were asked to present a plan on regional fairness and the Conservatives would present one on the self-employed.

*Business of Supply*

• (1540)

We did that. For over an hour and a half we talked about the Liberal 360-hour proposal, not a proposal advanced only by us, but advanced by many, regional fairness being a pretty important issue for many Canadians, not the least of whom is the current Prime Minister. When he was the pen for the Reform Party document, he indicated why should somebody in one part of the country not get access to employment insurance based on the same number of hours as somebody else. The current Prime Minister indicated that back then.

We talked about that proposal, the four of us plus two staff members. The four elected members, two Liberals and two Conservatives, asked the director to study our proposals. They asked him to study those two proposals.

On the self-employed, there was nothing. Members should keep in mind that in the last election the Conservatives had in their platform a plan to bring self-employed in for maternal parental benefits. It was in their platform.

We asked if the government at least had that, and we were told it could not give us that. That belongs to the Conservative Party of Canada not to us. The government would not even give us a cost on that proposal. On that very proposal the Conservatives could not give us any information to substantiate what they wanted.

On that day we agreed to meet three times in August, which we did. On August 6, again, information was thrown on the table when we got there, violating the protocols established by the committee and agreed to by the Conservative members as well the Liberal members. We went to that meeting and they threw information on the table, including a document marked “not for distribution” where they allegedly costed the Liberal proposal. They costed it at over \$4 billion which we knew did not make any sense. By the way, that document marked “not for distribution” had been given to the media before we even saw it.

There were no answers to our other questions. There was no information on the self-employed, nothing. That was another week wasted.

On August 13, again we got the information at the last minute. They produced a new costing for 360 hours, but refused to substantiate it. They refused to say how they came across those numbers. They refused to say what made up the numbers in the costing of that plan.

There was no costing on a 390-hour national standard or a 420-hour national standard.

We looked at other issues. The western premiers had come up with some ideas, and we looked at that proposal. We looked at reducing regional rates. We looked at what other countries are doing on the self-employed. However, there was no information or any proposal from the government and the department that works for that government, on the self-employed.

At this point in time I was getting calls from my colleagues, many of whom may be in this chamber now, saying, “They are not serious about this. Why do you continue meeting?” The leader said, “We are

going to continue meeting because something may come out of it. We are going to be the ones that try to get something done.”

I understand the frustration people have when they look at a group like that. People say that it is just more of the same, members get together but nobody is serious about it. It is not that way.

This was an opportunity for Parliament to work outside of this chamber, for us to get together and say, “This is what we believe. We can back it up. Tell us what you believe. Give us something. Let us talk about it and see if there is some common ground”. There was nothing from the government.

On August 20, two months after the group was set up, we put forward our ideas and had nothing from the Conservative government. It was the last scheduled meeting of the group. This was when we spoke to the Parliamentary Budget Officer saying that if we were not going to get accurate information from the government, perhaps he could help us.

We asked him to cost our proposal. The proposal that the Parliamentary Budget Officer looked at was the proposal that the government had costed at over \$4 billion. The Parliamentary Budget Officer came back with a cost of under \$1.2 billion. He said, among other things, that the government's total cost estimate overstated the costs, that the government's dynamic cost estimate was flawed.

We tried very hard to act in good faith in this meeting.

It is not with joy or excitement or even trepidation that we bring forward this motion today. It is the cold eye of recognition of a simple, clear fact, that we have no confidence in the government and that in spite of numerous opportunities provided to the government to make Parliament work, it has chosen not to.

Canadians do not want a government that thinks it has all the solutions. Canadians do want a government that recognizes there are challenges and that it can help with those solutions.

It is the foundation of this country, of the ethic that holds together this large and diverse land. It is the ethic that brings us together.

• (1545)

The government does not see it that way. We do not see politics as the Conservatives do. We do not see government as they do. We do not see Canada as they do. We have no confidence in the government.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of the hon. member across the way. It was very interesting. The speech was actually a commercial of why Canadians cannot trust the Liberal Party.

*Business of Supply*

He stands in his place and says that for three years they sustained the government. They did not agree with things, but they sustained the government. Yet, he got up in his place and voted for things that he did not believe in. Here is the underlying problem with the Liberal Party and why Canadians can never trust the Liberal Party to govern. It has no principles, it has no substance and it will fight for nothing.

When that party was in power, it attacked the provinces. The Liberals took some \$25 billion out of the provinces' hands. Who did that impact? It hurt health care. It hurt people on social assistance across this country. They did not ask the provinces how they could do this together. They simply unilaterally took a hatchet to health care, to social programs and social services.

We put forward an economic action plan to help our unemployed. What did they do? They voted against it. We brought forward an action plan to help Canadians who want to renovate their homes. How did they vote? They voted against it. We put forward \$200 billion in tax cuts for Canadians, for working families. We brought forward initiatives on crime. How did these people vote? They voted against it. They should be ashamed of themselves for trying to force an election that nobody wants.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Madam Speaker, I recognize that the hon. member is new to the House, but he was surely alive in the 1990s. Surely he recalls the deficit we inherited the last time. It was \$42 billion. This time it is over \$50 billion.

He talks about cuts to provinces. Members of his own party who were in the House at the time said the cuts did not go far enough. They said in the House that we should have cut more from the social infrastructure of this country. They said we should have cut more. That is the hypocrisy of the government.

Yes, times were not easy in the 1990s, but I am awful proud to stand here as a Liberal member of Parliament and say that we invested in the child tax benefit, that we invested in guaranteed income supplement, and that we did things for students and for Canadians that they needed.

The social infrastructure of this country that was built by the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party is being ignored and disbanded by this Conservative Party, and the hon. member has the gall to stand in his place and call us hypocrites. That is an absolutely, unbelievably hypocritical statement and I am sure he is very sorry about it already.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague gave a brilliant speech on why we should have no confidence in the Conservative Party. Quebeckers realized this a long time ago. The Conservatives' ratings have been spiralling downward in Quebec for a number of weeks. We do not know where they will end up.

What my colleague forgot to say is that the Liberals are just as badly off, both in the polls and in terms of what Quebeckers think of them, and there are some fundamental reasons for that. Today, the Liberals are criticizing the Conservatives for the state of employment insurance when it was they who created the situation by siphoning

off \$57 billion from the fund and leaving it empty for their successors.

Quebeckers consider the Liberals and the Conservatives to be two entities with the same outlook and they will relegate them to the same position in the next election.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Madam Speaker, let me give as cogent an answer as I can because I respect the position of the Bloc members on issues like EI. They support great changes to employment insurance and I understand that. They never have to pay for them. They never have to be the government. They never have to balance the books. They never have to do anything like that.

On employment insurance, for years the Bloc and the NDP have brought private members' bills to the House, and I have supported them and even encouraged members of the Liberal Party to support them, and they have supported them, but they have added not one person to the EI roles, not one person. That is why, in the last couple of years, labour leaders from Quebec have come to the Liberal Party. I have been in those discussions and they have said, "We need you because we need an alternative to the Conservative Party".

Somebody has to stand up for Canadian workers who will actually have their hands on the levers of power and do something good for this country. Labour leaders in Quebec, the member for Honoré-Mercier and people from other places, have fought for that principle. I respect their position.

We have a balanced approach. As a future government, everything we say today we know we will have to live with when we form government and the people of Canada give us that privilege. We measure that and we will do what we think is right for Canadian workers.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to our party's motion of no confidence in the Conservative government and build on the substantive evidence. Other speakers before me have put forward why the House should show no confidence in the government and, especially, in the Prime Minister.

Simply put, it is a government Canadians cannot trust and cannot believe. It has actually squandered our nation's potential away. The biggest cost of the government's incompetence will fall on our children and grandchildren, not only by the increased debt that the government has laid on their backs but also by the decreased social and economic programs that lead to our children and grandchildren's potential, such as research and development, early learning and child care, education, and the list goes on.

As the member for Wascana said earlier, the current Conservative government has squandered the surplus of the previous Liberal government that Canadians worked so hard to attain. It moved Canada from being best of the G8 to the bottom of the G7. However, instead of admitting to their failure, the Conservatives use taxpayers' money to advertise. Their basic purpose is to mislead and confuse.

*Business of Supply*

As our leader has said, they have spent six times more promoting their own inaction plan than on warning of the dangers of H1N1.

Let me give the House one small example out of the thousands of examples of waste by the government.

I have here a picture and I know I cannot use a prop, but this is a picture of a sign that was put up in front of the Jean Canfield Building and it talks about Canada's action plan using stimulus to create jobs.

The member for Charlottetown announced that building in 2004 and the member for Kings—Hants was the minister of public works at the time. It was built before the current government came to power.

Why would the Conservatives put a sign like that there? As our the leader said, they are “using public funds to promote untruths”. That is what the current government is all about: using public funds to promote untruths.

President Obama, in an August 5 email that he sent out when he was taking on the Republicans over the health care issue, said, and I quote because I believe it is the same problem in Canada:

So we've got to get out there, fight lies with truth and set the record straight.

That is what we have to do in Canada. Because the government over there is using false promotion, trying to confuse the Canadian public, trying to leave the impression that it is doing something when it is really doing the very opposite, and it is tearing down the social and economic structure that Canadians have spent their lives fighting for. It is driving this country into deficit. That is why we can no longer support the government.

Nowhere is the government's record of failure worse and nowhere is the hurt deeper than in rural Canada. Rural Canada is where the great economic potential of this nation lies: in agriculture, in fisheries, in forestry, in mining, and in energy. Those industries are the generators of wealth. However, most are being undermined and left to drift on their own because of the government's inaction.

Forestry was sold out in an agreement with the United States. It still pains forestry workers and plants are still closing to this day. In fisheries, while the east coast lobster fisheries faced disastrous prices, the minister promised help, in March. However, to this date, not a dime has been spent in that help for fisheries. Again, it is lost hope and lost dreams, announcements, and nothing delivered.

The Fraser River fisheries is facing a disaster. Instead of the Prime Minister listening to one of his own, the member from Delta—Richmond East who knows the fisheries, the Prime Minister fired him from the fisheries committee, and now, we are losing the salmon industry in the Fraser River.

• (1555)

Why did he fire him? Because the member was asking for government involvement that would have helped the industry. This is a Prime Minister that is in charge of governing but does not believe in government. That is why the member for Delta—Richmond East is not on that committee.

One of the government's worst record is in the area of agriculture. Remember the Prime Minister's promise in 2006 on cost of

production for the farm community? Farm debt has soared to four times that of United States farms and we have lost an average of 3,600 farmers per year. How many dollars were spent under that cost of production program? The answer is zero.

In fact, in the last budget the cost of production program was dropped. What does that tell us? It tells us that the Prime Minister broke his word, not for the first time and probably not for the last.

What about hog producers who are facing the worst financial crisis ever in Canadian history? We have a Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food who announced a few things in the spring, but during the worst crisis ever to hit our industry, he decided to give one press release on top of another and thought that this would do the trick. No, it did not.

The scheme he came up with at the end is almost like a Ponzi scheme, which ensures that farmers can borrow money from a bank that is guaranteed by the government. However, the first condition is that farmers must pay back the government for the unsecured money they received from the government the year before.

Really, what is happening is farmers are now obligated to the banks and they pay off Treasury Board. The minister from Manitoba sitting here, where hog production is the highest in the country, should be ashamed of himself. The minister's department is getting paid while producers acquire more debt. How can farmers in this country have any confidence in a government like that?

What about the beef industry? The minister announced in the spring he was going to challenge country of origin labelling. October 9 is an important date. If the consultations are not completed by October 9, then the investigation cannot get started and that means the investigation will not get started until well into 2010.

What are the consequences to the beef industry without action? The result is this. Our closest market is the United States. Hog exports are down 50%. Slaughter cattle exports are down 20%. Feeder cattle exports are down 50%.

As a farmer in my province told me, five years ago he was getting an average of \$1,500 for an animal that went to slaughter. What is he getting in 2009? He is getting an average of \$1,106. How can farmers survive that? Who can have confidence in the actions of the government and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food?

Let us look at AgriFlex, which the party over there committed itself to during the last election. Liberals did as well, but we would have kept our word. All the Conservatives did with AgriFlex was put less money in over more time and did not allow the flexibility to do what farmers wanted it to do. In fact, the applications have now come out.

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I believe it is designed to be a slush fund for the minister. Maybe the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has learned from the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities that he could use a slush fund catered to people who support him and to Conservative ridings. However, that has nothing to do with the economic crisis in the farm community.

Then there is AgriStability. Conservatives promised in 2006 that they would get rid of that awful CAIS program, that they would cancel it. They changed the name and replaced it with AgriStability. The only problem is that last year they changed how the calculations would be done and the cheques are now rolling out. They are 60% of what CAIS would have paid. How can people have confidence in the government? The fact of the matter is they cannot.

● (1600)

In Prince Edward Island, producers were promised by the government \$12.4 million for weather-damaged crops. However, that money did not come out until it finally got delivered a year later. It was promised at the height of an election. As a result, a number of farmers did not get their crop in this spring. Worse yet, the government promised \$6 million for the Atlantic beef plant for all of Atlantic Canada, and that money has not been delivered yet.

How can Canadians, how can farmers, have faith in a government like that? I say vote no confidence in the government.

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member talk about rural Canada and talk about taxes.

It is interesting that he also talked in particular about the beef industry. I would like to ask the hon. member a question to do with taxes and that industry.

He and the Liberal Party have already said they support harmonized sales tax in Ontario. As the hon. member probably knows, beef cattle change hands three or four times before they go to market. There is no tax on them right now. Now they will have a 13% tax every time those cattle change hands.

I would like to know from the hon. member, who aspires to be in government, and I am assuming aspires to be the minister of agriculture, how he can possibly say that he will help farmers when he is happy to charge them 13%, 13%, 13% and 13% again.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Madam Speaker, I talk about the HST as the Harper sales tax. I know there is great effort on the government side to try to blame it on the governments in B.C. and Ontario, but that is in fact what I call it because the Minister of Finance is promoting going to that harmonized sales tax.

In Prince Edward Island, members will know very well that the Prince Edward Island government, which is also being forced and basically bribed with more money to go that avenue, has said that it will not go that way. The connection is there that Ontario, B.C. and Prince Edward Island have all been pushed by the Minister of Finance to go to the harmonized sales tax.

However, the member's information on how it would affect the beef industry is wrong. It would not be—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would just like to remind members not to mention the names of sitting members of Parliament again.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

● (1605)

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am sitting here somewhat in disbelief listening to the rhetoric coming from the member for Malpeque.

In his comments about where we are heading with the agricultural industry, he blames it all on this government, when we know that the world is going through an economic recession that is driving down commodity prices worldwide and is no doubt hurting cattle and hog prices.

I am a cattle producer myself. I represent a large rural area. I have been to the cattle sales over the last couple of weeks and they have not been good, but that is not just because of things that are going on with the border and with the government. It is because of an oversupply of animals, high feed grain costs and high input costs. Those things are having an impact on price.

There is no question that country of origin labelling has had a major impact on trade going to the south. It presents some opportunities for us here to do more in processing locally and feeding more cattle locally, and we are starting to see a lot of initiatives. Just recently two processing plants in Manitoba got a \$50 million program to help with loans to expand their plants and convert them into federally inspected plants that will help with regional processing there.

However, the member is completely wrong in some of his comments. I wonder why he went and voted against farmers in my riding. The other night on our ways and means motion, he voted against tax deferrals for farmers facing drought and flooding. My area has been hit really hard with flooding. He voted against that. Rather than standing up for farmers, he stood up for his leader.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Madam Speaker, I believe that tax measure, if I am correct, passed this House and we are glad to see that the tax measure in fact goes to producers, but if he would follow my remarks, he would understand that there is just no way. Farmers are suffering. I find it unbelievable that the member from Manitoba can stand up in this House again and again and support the government.

The fact of the matter is that the minister from 2003 to 2006 put in place a program to get processing capacity and slaughter capacity up in this country and we could slaughter all our own. Since the government came into effect, that has eroded away and we are in the same situation again.

Maybe the Minister of Public Safety had it right in terms of the government's position relative to farmers. He is closing down the Frontenac prison farm in Kingston and here is what he had to say about why he was doing it:



We felt that that money could be more adequately redirected to programs where people would actually gain employable skills, as virtually nobody who went through those prison farms ended up with employable skills.

Obviously the government does not think farming—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I regret to interrupt the member, but resuming debate, the hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today. I would like to address this motion, not only from my point of view as government House leader, but as a member representing the interests of British Columbians. As House leader, I am proud of what our government has delivered in Parliament for Canadians and I might say, just look at what we have accomplished in this week alone.

However, before I get to this important list of the things we have accomplished, I would like to indicate to the Chair that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Blackstrap.

On Monday, we tabled in the House of Commons the third report to Canadians on our economic action plan. It reports that 90% of the stimulus funding for this fiscal year has now been committed to more than 7,500 infrastructure and housing projects. Over 4,000 of these projects have been launched in the first six months of our 24-month plan.

On Tuesday, Bill C-50 was adopted at second reading and sent to committee. The bill will provide additional employment insurance regular benefits to unemployed, long-tenured workers.

On Wednesday, the government introduced the second economic recovery bill. The bill will implement the home renovation tax credit and includes other measures from our very successful budget 2009.

The government is making this a productive Parliament for all Canadians. Even as the House adjourned for the summer, this sitting of Canada's 40th Parliament had seen more government bills introduced than in any Parliament's first sitting since 1993, 54 pieces of legislation in total. Yet what is especially remarkable amidst a Parliament that this motion we are debating today is attempting to kill is that 26 of those bills attained royal assent or passed into law. That is the second highest royal assent rate for a first sitting of a parliamentary session since 1993, and as members know, that was a majority government.

The legislation passed has been diverse, meaningful and ambitious including the legislation that allowed us to implement our economic action plan. It is that very plan that has inspired greater confidence in our government among British Columbians and my constituents in Prince George—Peace River amidst this global economic recession.

The resource sectors in B.C. were among the first to be hit by the global downturn, yet throughout the past several months our government has taken targeted, tangible action that addresses the economic needs of British Columbians. The forestry sector in B.C. is benefiting from the \$1 billion green transformation fund which will help struggling pulp and paper producers become more energy efficient and competitive in tough economic times. The fund provides forest companies with 16¢ per litre of black liquor

### *Business of Supply*

produced by mills in the 2009 calendar year so that they can lower their energy costs and their carbon emissions.

We also enhanced the employment insurance work-sharing program which is used by mills to avoid layoffs during adverse market conditions. This has been incredibly successful right across the country, but especially in my riding of Prince George—Peace River where the expansion of the work-sharing program has meant the retention of hundreds of jobs. Thanks to these improvements, thousands more forestry workers will remain gainfully employed until market conditions improve.

Furthermore, we significantly expanded training opportunities under the EI program to ensure laid-off British Columbians can get the training they need to transition into a new career or industry. Older workers, long-tenured workers, aboriginals, contractors, the self-employed and those just entering the workforce are getting more training and skills assistance from this government than they ever have before. Just as workers must diversify and expand their skills during this downturn, communities must also adapt and restructure their economies.

Our government has partnered with the provincial government, municipal governments, local economic development organizations and businesses to ensure our hardest-hit communities emerge from this recession stronger than before.

The \$1 billion community adjustment fund alone has brought tremendous hope to struggling towns and villages throughout the province of B.C. and things are happening quickly. In central and northern B.C., the federal government partnered with the Northern Development Initiative Trust to deliver \$30 million in community adjustment funds to support local projects that are creating jobs and restoring economic stability now in communities heavily reliant on resource-based industries such as forestry and mining. I would like to pay special tribute to the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification, my colleague from Blackstrap.

● (1610)

The Northern Development Initiative Trust, or NDIIT as it is known, identified projects, many of which are already under way, that will create or preserve over 1,400 jobs in central and northern B.C. NDIIT has also been instrumental in helping municipalities and businesses access federal and provincial funding by teaching them how to write better grant applications. The result has been that some of the smaller communities in central and northern B.C., especially my riding, which have limited resources and staff, have been able to secure the funding they need to sustain their infrastructure. These are opportunities they may have missed in the past. These opportunities are offered through the expanded building Canada communities component, through the recreation and infrastructure fund, through the national trails partnership, through the stimulus fund, and the list goes on.

*Business of Supply*

Last week I was joined in Vancouver by B.C.'s premier to announce the latest round of Canada-B.C. infrastructure investments, a further 174 projects totalling \$719 million, which will add to the frenzy of construction activity that B.C. residents have been witnessing throughout the past several months.

A week earlier, B.C. residents celebrated the Prime Minister's announcement in Washington, D.C. that the Government of Canada will contribute up to \$130 million toward the construction of B.C.'s northwest transmission line. I think it is important to note that this project is located in the riding of the NDP member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. Financed through the green infrastructure fund, this project could advance a connection between southeast Alaska and the North American transmission grid, via B.C. The transmission line will ensure a more efficient electricity grid and increase the use of clean and renewable sources of energy.

Our government is investing in projects that ensure both economic stimulus and environmental stewardship in the long term. I am proud that the Bear Mountain wind park, located in my constituency, just outside of Dawson Creek, will be B.C.'s first operational wind farm, thanks in part to a \$20.5 million investment by our federal government. The Bear Mountain wind project has created hundreds of local jobs during construction, and when it comes online it will create more employment and training opportunities. It will also power up to 25,000 homes with clean, renewable, greenhouse gas-free and pollution-free energy.

The government has earned the confidence of Canadians by getting job-creating projects like these under way in communities all across our country, helping to cushion us against the impact of the global economic downturn. What is more, these activities will ensure that our cities, towns and villages possess critical energy and infrastructure, highways, roads, bridges, recreation facilities, sewers, water systems and more, so that communities and residents can thrive and flourish for decades to come.

This brings me to the question: Why are the Liberals proposing a motion of non-confidence in our government today? We are getting things done in Parliament. I have explained that. We are getting things done now, good things, throughout communities right across the country. No one wants an election. It would be irresponsible to go to the polls just as our economy is beginning its fragile return from the recession. Who in their right mind would want to interrupt that?

What is scary is that while our government and the rest of the country are focused on economic recovery, the Liberal Party and its leader are focused on prompting an unnecessary election. In the motion itself, the Liberals provide no reason for their lack of confidence in the government. That is because they simply have no reason, other than their opportunistic attempt to grab power.

I have not been able to find a single Canadian who wants an election, and I have travelled across our land. The leader of the Liberal Party was asked in the chamber to name a Canadian who wants an election. Presumably he could not name one this morning, because he did not name any. He should set aside his desire for an unnecessary election and a premature return to Harvard, and instead commit to working with our government for the betterment of all

Canadians. With the help of the opposition, we can stay the course to the betterment of all Canadians.

● (1615)

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member across for his questions, but as he has been reading in the media over the last couple of days, this spending that he elaborated on seems to be an elaborate pork scheme if we look at it. Especially in the province of British Columbia, the funding in Conservative ridings is about four times what it is in non-Conservative ridings.

I want to point out to the member across that the deficit now is \$56 billion. A year ago the Prime Minister was on TV promising Canadians that there would be no deficit. In January he said it was \$34 billion. In February it was \$45 billion. Now it is something like \$55 billion or \$65 billion. No one knows.

This is my question to the member across: Is this \$56 billion deficit, which has to be paid back by our children, by generations to come, not just an elaborate reward scheme for Conservative ridings across Canada?

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Madam Speaker, that is quite interesting. The opposition members have been trying to tag us with what they perceive to be an inequity in how these funds are allocated across the country. Whether it is in question period, on panels, in discussions or in interviews, we have seen time and time again that they are unable to provide the evidence of that.

I named just a few programs. There is a myriad of programs. He is quite right in his assertion that our country is facing a large deficit. It is of concern to all of us. That is why we have done everything we can to ensure it is not a structural deficit, that it will come to a close at the end of the two-year period and that we provide stimulus for the Canadian economy.

Specific to his allegation, and I will call it that to be kind, of the inequity of funding, I mentioned in my speech the \$130 million that I fought hard for to get to the northwest corner of British Columbia, not into my riding.

I have a list of other projects, but I see you are about to rise and cut me off before I get to them, Madam Speaker. Hopefully the next question will provide me with the opportunity to answer my hon. colleague.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member may undoubtedly continue. I am trying to be fair in allocating time.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

● (1620)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, over the last couple of weeks, not one person has phoned my office to ask me for an election. In fact, it has been the opposite. One hundred percent of the people I have talked to are in opposition to what will amount to a \$300 million expense that no one wants. That would reset the clock on all the legislation we have been debating, for the third time in some cases.

*Business of Supply*

Earlier today, the member for Wascana was criticizing the \$56 billion deficit when only a few months ago he and his party asked the government to spend more in the stimulus package. When we spend money, we will have a deficit. It just makes sense. The money is being spent for good causes.

I appeal to the Liberals to use their opposition days more constructively to improve housing and consumer affairs and for other really good ideas in which I know they believe and support.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Madam Speaker, I could not agree more. As I said in my remarks, not one Canadian I have found, other than a Liberal, would want the election the Liberals are trying to force on our country.

I do want to reply to the colleague who spoke before him. The member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca was looking to try and rise. I point out that I have three projects that have been approved for his riding. The city of Langford's City Centre Park sportsplex is going to get \$13.4 million. Esquimalt's Archie Browning Sports Centre will get \$1.99 million for upgrading. The city of Langford will get \$1.8 million for stormwater flood hazard protection.

Those are just three that are in the hon. colleagues's Liberal riding.

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak on the results of our government's economic action plan.

Our government has been taking action on the economy, while also thinking of Canada's future. We are investing in communities right across the country, and we are already beginning to see the positive impact of these investments on Canada's economy.

Our government's plan is very clear. Through Canada's economic action plan, we are making short-term investments to create jobs and stimulate economic activity. In every case, our long-term goal is to lay the groundwork for Canada's future prosperity.

One of the measures we have taken to move Canada forward is the recreational infrastructure Canada program, or RInC as it is known. Over a two year period, this new infrastructure program is investing \$500 million to improve recreational infrastructure in communities across the country.

As of September 24, federal funding of over \$46 million has been invested through RInC towards 277 projects across the west. That makes for a total of almost \$153 million invested in RInC projects across the west.

Another program included in our economic action plan is the community adjustment fund, or CAF. This is another measure that will help communities across the west prosper. CAF is a \$1 billion Canada-wide two-year economic stimulus designed to create jobs and maintain employment in communities hardest hit by the global recession.

This fund supports affected communities in western Canada such as those that rely on forestry, mining, agricultural, fisheries, as well as communities that depend on the manufacturing sector. As of September 24, our government has invested well over \$158 million in 147 CAF projects across the west.

CAF and RInC are more than just numbers. The real results are the positive impacts these projects are having in our communities. In the city of New Westminster, B.C. our government invested over \$900,000 through the RInC program to upgrade and expand their new centre for activity living. This recreation facility will now be able to provide expanded programs and services that are used primarily by older adults.

In the province of Alberta, through our CAF program, we partnered with the Government of Alberta and each invested \$15 million towards the firesmart initiative. This initiative is putting loggers back to work and reducing the fire risk in Alberta communities. To date, more than 14 projects across the province have been funded and this is helping sustain more than 24 businesses and treat an estimated 1,700 hectares of forest that are currently exposed to wildfire threats.

In Manitoba, the Winnipeg Soccer Federation received \$300,000 in RInC funding to install two internationally approved soccer fields. This project will benefit not only a local community but it will attract games and tournaments that could not be hosted there before.

For my home province of Saskatchewan, the first round of RInC is complete and a second round is already being worked on. In Saskatchewan RInC is proving to be a success through projects such as in the town of Allan. Allan will now be able to move forward with rehabilitation of the town's swimming pool, thanks to the funding of over \$191,000 provided through RInC. Funding will go towards the reconstruction of the Allan and district swimming pool basin, deck and mechanical systems around the basin. These improvements will reduce operating costs through the use of solar water heating.

What does this mean to a community like Allan? It means that a pool that was closed for several years due to disrepair can now reopen for the families and children in Allan next summer.

Mayor Larry Sommerfeld had this to say about our government's investment in his community:

The Town of Allan and surrounding community are overjoyed to have the Recreation Infrastructure Canada program approved for our Swimming Pool Retrofit...Our community has spent three years fundraising for the project and this helping hand from the Federal and Provincial Governments will enable us to have an operating pool next summer, a great way for Allan to celebrate our 100th birthday.

● (1625)

I am proud of our government. I am proud of how we can deliver opportunities to impact communities like the community of Allan. This is an essential short-term response. It will help maintain Canada's economic strength by creating jobs right now when they are needed most.

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RInC will provide more than a short-term economic stimulus. It will also provide a long-term investment in the quality of life for Canadians. Recreational facilities such as ice rinks, pools, soccer fields, basketball and tennis courts are the hearts of Canadian communities from coast to coast, providing places where families, friends and neighbours can gather together to get fit and have fun.

Many of our country's recreational facilities were built to celebrate Canada's centennial in 1967. It was a time of great national pride and enormous optimism for the future, so it seems fitting that we should reinvest in those facilities today.

RInC is just one of a broad range of initiatives announced in Canada's economic action plan. Not only will these initiatives stimulate and sustain economic activity during this international crisis, but it will also advance our country's long-term economic objectives.

Our government is creating and protecting jobs, building infrastructure, easing the tax burden on families, supporting Canadians who have lost their jobs, helping threatened industries and laying the foundations for our future prosperity. By making investments like this, we are seizing opportunities to revitalize our economy, create jobs and ensure that when the recovery comes, our economy will emerge stronger than ever.

Canada's economic action plan is in action. Our plan is delivering priorities for westerners. Our plan is delivering for Canadians across Canada.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, if 90% of infrastructure projects are under way, as the government claims, how would an election really affect something that would essentially be on automatic pilot, if it were true?

We believe the government is sitting on projects. Is it doing so in order to have an excuse, if there is an election, to say that the projects have not begun because of an election? In other words, is it doing with infrastructure projects what it did with the home renovation tax credit, which was not to pass it when it could have been passed, but to hold it in abeyance as a threat?

• (1630)

**Hon. Lynne Yelich:** Madam Speaker, it just goes to show how badly the Liberals want an election if that is the only question they can ask about my speech. They are more interested in an election than they are in helping us deliver the economic action plan.

If the Liberals continue to push for an election, I think there will be some very angry Canadians. They will be so angry, because of the impact on the economic action plan, that they will probably ensure the Liberals never get into power.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Madam Speaker, what is at stake for me in this debate is what is happening to the innocent victims in my community of Hamilton and, indeed, across the country who have lost their jobs as a result of this recession.

I certainly wish the EI reforms were much more comprehensive. I had the privilege of tabling a motion in the House that dealt with comprehensive EI reform, such as increasing the benefits, decreasing the hours of eligibility, taking away the two-week waiting period and helping those who desperately need training and retraining. One of

the other elements of that motion was to provide the opportunity to get EI to those who were self-employed.

As a minister of state and therefore a minister who is privy to discussions in cabinet, could she let the House know whether the government is still committed to living up to at least that part of the EI package, which was part of the government's campaign pledge? Also, and more important, could she tell Canadians, particularly those who own small businesses or home businesses, when they might finally get the support of the government as they are losing their jobs as a result of this recession?

**Hon. Lynne Yelich:** Madam Speaker, it was in our election platform. It is a change to employment insurance, and everyone knows these things are not done easily. They take a lot of work, a lot of study, a lot of committee work. It is difficult to get these deep changes in government policy done when every day an election is looming over our head.

I would suggest that the NDP speak to the Liberals and they get serious about sitting down to work on changing EI as the member suggested. It is something that I have been interested in. Our party put it in our last election platform.

We cannot do legislation that takes so much in-depth work and committee work when we are facing a non-confidence vote every day because the Liberals want an election.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I do not know if the member is aware, but this is quite a dilemma. The Liberals introduced a motion of non-confidence in the government, and up until now, the NDP has accused the Liberals of keeping the government in power.

This evening, in a few minutes, the NDP will support the Conservative government. The NDP probably looked at the polls and realized that if there were an election, they could disappear.

The dilemma is this. The Liberals do not have confidence in the government, the NDP is trying to save itself by voting with the Conservatives, and Canadians do not have confidence in the Liberals, the masterminds behind the sponsorship scandal.

Is this not proof that the federal system does not work? It is high time Quebec became a sovereign nation.

[English]

**Hon. Lynne Yelich:** Madam Speaker, the chair of the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary said that it is federal government funding that makes projects possible for small communities, otherwise they would not be able to carry out these programs. The lights in the town of Vauxhall's community complex will burn brighter and more effectively in the near future.

They want to thank the federal government for what we have done with the stimulus package, which allows small rural communities across the country to access funds to make their communities more viable.

*Business of Supply*

•(1635)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Toronto Centre.

“That this House has lost confidence in the government”. This is not something that is said lightly. It is something the Liberal Party is saying after serious thought, after consulting with Canadians from coast to coast and after seeing to what extent this government is unable to provide Canadians with the help they need in these difficult times.

It is not a matter of wanting an election. It is simply that the Liberal Party cannot say it still has confidence in the government and does not believe that this government is up to the task that Canadians entrusted it with.

[*English*]

Being in this House used to mean something. It used to be a place of real debate, of real discussion on how to help Canadians participate more fully in our economic prosperity and how to help Canadians move forward with their hopes and dreams. It was a place where we had real conversations about how to articulate our values into policy and address the big challenges on the horizon, looking at where we are going as a people and as a country.

My grandfather, the member for Vancouver North, was here 70 years ago when this House was debating the rise of fascism in Europe and through the years that we were dealing with a post-World War II Canada, industrializing and strengthening our manufacturing base. There were real conversations. My father, 40 years ago, was here in this House to tackle bilingualism, to look at how Canada could be a force for good in the world, a balance in the rise of cold war conflicts. There were issues that defined their times.

Now, on the defining issues of our time, we seem to be nowhere to be found. Where is the government on the environment, how it affects Canadians here at home, how it affects the world that we are shaping, all of us together in this civilization? Where are we?

Where is the government on the fight against poverty, the extreme poverty that exists around the world but also in our own communities, particularly our native communities? The fight against poverty is one that the government has not brought forward; it has not responded to the prodding from this half of the House to address.

The government has been totally absent from the defining issues of our time.

The irony is that at a time when the Liberal Party is saying that this House has lost the confidence of the government, Canadians are suggesting that perhaps they have lost confidence in the capacity of this House collectively to deal with the important issues.

No one has all the answers. The 308 of us who gather from every corner of this country have been entrusted by our constituents to try to work out compromises, policies that will help us through, that we will come together and be worthy of the trust that Canadians have placed in us. Time and time again the government has pushed us to fail Canadians in those responsibilities.

When the government's perfect, culminating achievement has been to create an atmosphere in this House of Commons that is based on attacks, on division, on extreme partisanship, it has succeeded in the one thing we know the right-wing Conservative ideology is all about, which is making Canadians believe less in their government, expecting less from their government, and convincing Canadians that governments should not be in the business of anything other than short-term responses to immediate, pressing electoral problems.

•(1640)

That is not what Canadians need. Unfortunately, it has been demonstrated that the politics of division can be very effective: to pick one's votes, to pander to them, to discard those who were not going to vote for that person anyway. The current government is proof that this is a good way of getting elected, but it is also proof that it cannot govern a country as richly diverse as Canada: east to west, north to south, urban, rural.

We cannot govern a Canada that is strong, not in spite of its differences but because of them, by playing on divisions. That is the great failing of the government.

[*Translation*]

I have just completed a tour of the CEGEPs and universities in eastern Quebec and, like everywhere else in Canada that I have talked with young people, the same question keeps coming up. Young people are wondering why they would bother being interested in what is happening in Parliament. Why should they get involved or even vote when they hear that a program like the Youth Skills Link Program to help young people get into the labour force gave 75% of its assistance to young people living in Conservative ridings; when they learn that out of a \$260 billion economic action plan, only 0.04% was designated for youth programs despite the fact that young people make up 37% of our population; when they know that the student unemployment rate is almost 20%?

[*English*]

When over 200,000 young people have lost their jobs over the past year, the highest job loss of any age group, our youth have serious questions for the government that the government has been unwilling or incapable of answering so far. The tactics and tone of the Conservative government are all designed to make Canadians believe less in their government, less in their society and to expect less of themselves. Nowhere is this more devastating than in the pernicious impact on our youth.

[*Translation*]

Our young people have the talent, the intelligence and the motivation to truly change Canada and the world. But we are not inspiring them; we are not involving them enough, we are not providing them with the tools they need.

[*English*]

Young people are getting involved in record numbers with their communities, with international and domestic NGOs. They are caring deeply about how they shape the world, how they can make a better community and a better future for all of us. The fact that they could not care less about what happens in the House is, for me, the most glaring indictment of the visionless government.

*Business of Supply*

The dominance of short-term pandering for votes, electoral strategies, has shortchanged all Canadians. The fact that we have been conditioned over the past four years to believe less of our government, to believe less in the capacity of all of us to propose large visions for this country, to say who we are, where we want to go, for me, is the greatest failing here.

There has been no articulation from these Conservatives of where we are going as a people and as a country. That, for me, is the final failure in a long list that ends today for the Liberal Party of Canada.

Let us be very clear that we do not want an election any more than any other Canadian, but the Liberal Party simply cannot pretend that the government is doing a good enough job at serving Canadians and building our future.

This is not about politics. This is beyond politics. This is about demanding a Parliament and a government that is worthy of the hopes and dreams of all Canadians.

• (1645)

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member asked who we are and what do we stand for and I would point out some things that people have said about who we are.

*Newsweek* has said:

If President Obama is looking for smart government, there is much he, and all of us, could learn from our...neighbor to the north.

*The Economist* said this about our Prime Minister:

...his government has taken prudent measures to help Canada weather a storm it cannot duck...

*The New York Times* said this about Canada:

Why not emulate the best in the world, which happens to be right next door?

The *Daily Telegraph* in London, a publication that the member's leader ought to be fairly familiar with, says:

...the Canadian Tories are a model of how to behave during a downturn.

Here is what the hon. member had to say about his own leader, the leader of the Liberal Party. He said:

...maybe he has the intelligence, but maybe not the wisdom required.

Is it possible that today is the perfect example of his leader's lack of wisdom?

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see all those clippings about how strong the Canadian banking system is and would like to remind the hon. member that it was his leader who fought hardest and said that we should be more like Citibank in this country and that we needed to unite our banks and try to create it. It was Liberal policies that we had.

It is also nice to see that it was the Liberal opposition that pushed the government into responding to stimulus when it came forward with an economic update that was absolute fabrication when it promised a surplus in the last election.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Papineau, who is extolling the virtues of his own party, as compared to the government, where is the \$3.3 million that the Liberals pocketed during the sponsorship

scandal and that is still missing? Where is it? Why has it still not been put back into the government's coffers? Where is the \$50 billion that was taken from the employment insurance fund? Workers and employers had contributed that money to create a fund so that workers would have adequate income if they lost their jobs. Where is that money that was misappropriated from the EI fund? It started with Jean Chrétien, then Paul Martin—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. I would ask the hon. member for Papineau to answer.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, I can understand where my hon. colleague from Gatineau is coming from, because he can see that the Liberal Party is popular in Quebec. People are interested in what we have to offer. They want us back in government. If he wants to talk about the past, he should try telling the truth—

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. I would like to give the hon. member a chance to respond while not being heckled by other members.

For a brief question, the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the member says that this was not about politics, but he wants to trigger an election campaign. He says that this is about Canadians and policies. He stood there for 10 minutes and did not put one single idea forward. He says that employment insurance is very important and yet the Liberals walked away from the negotiations and conversations this summer. He says that the budget and the economy is so important but the Liberals offered no amendment to our budget. He says that our government is about division. This Conservative government is the longest serving minority government in Canadian history. We get that record by working with other political parties and getting things done.

We were elected because Liberals failed and we were re-elected because we are getting the job done. The fact is that the vote tonight, and the member knows it, the NDP is doing the Liberals the biggest favour they have ever had in the history of their party.

• (1650)

**Mr. Justin Trudeau:** Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that when the hon. minister was asking for ideas, my suggestion to bring forward a conversation about youth and service in this House was shot down by the Conservative Party.

On the other issue, I would like to respond to every Conservative who stood and said that we were trying to push an election, that we wanted an election and that we are trying for an election. Have they seen the polls? Our interest right now is about telling the government that it is not doing good enough. If someone else will support them, I say let them do it, but we cannot look at our—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. On a point of order, the hon. minister.

**Hon. James Moore:** Madam Speaker, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to extend that member's time for five minutes so he can continue on with his brilliance.

*Business of Supply*

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

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** That was not a point of order.

[*Translation*]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, Government Spending.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, such as it is. The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, a long time ago, in fact, as members opposite will know, a great many years ago, when I was a small boy, I read the book *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a story by Robert Louis Stevenson. Members will recall that the point of that story was that by simply drinking a glass of a particular potion, what seemed like a perfectly responsible and reputable person would suddenly become some kind of a monster.

I must confess that I was listening to the debate unfold this morning and this afternoon, and in particular I say this of the speech of the government House leader, who looked so good, and I know on television he looked even better. The hon. member spoke about how the mayors were, surprise, surprise, expressing gratitude for the fact that they were getting some money to build a school rink or whatever it happened to be across the country and all the projects that are taking place and all the positive things saying that the last thing this House needs is any infusion of politics or the last thing the country needs is any infusion of an election.

I can remember the Prime Minister saying earlier on that the country does not need any political gains.

Well, that is Dr. Jekyll speaking, and that is the respectable side that we have seen in this debate. I am sure many of us in this House have received various kinds of counselling and advice with respect to how to talk to the media and how to talk to the camera, that we should not raise our voice and that we should talk in a calm voice. I am sure there are many members who do it very well and many members who do not do it so well. Some members avoid responding to idiotic heckling coming from the other side. It is not a good idea to respond to the comments because the people who are watching on television cannot hear the inane comments that are being made.

However, there is another side of the Conservative Party and there is another side of the Conservative government, and that is the side that we see every night when we go home and turn on our television sets. We have been doing this, not for a few weeks, not for a few months, but for a very long time.

First, the Conservatives started out by attacking my colleague, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier, who was our previous leader and who is a very fine and distinguished individual.

[*Translation*]

I want to say that I have never met a more moral, direct or honest man in politics than our previous leader, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier. But the Conservatives decided to attack his

personality, not his politics, his career or his courage. There was no election. We were not in the midst of an election campaign, yet they decided, night after night, to make personal attacks against a member who was doing his job.

• (1655)

[*English*]

After we chose a new leader in the House of Commons, the very first thing we saw was an attack on the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, not because of what he believes in or his politics, but because of his past and the fact that he was out of the country. It was a personal, vicious, constant, never-ending, corrosive attack on the personality of a person.

For those of us who have been in this business for a while, it is like water off a duck's back. One expects it to happen. However, what we have seen here is that there is another side. When the political party opposite says that it does not want political games or an election, who does it think it is kidding? The party opposite is campaigning for an election each and every day of the year, day after day, night after night. It never stops and it never ends.

Not a single intervention is made and not a step is taken that is not controlled by the Prime Minister's Office. Not a declaration is made that is not part of a systematic political election campaign. When I hear the party opposite talking with piety and rectitude about its interest in building hockey rinks and making parks better for Canadians, all I can say is that is not the Conservative Party that I see every night on television.

The Conservative Party that I know and that I have learned to see every night on television is a party that has nothing better to do than to drag the reputation of every other politician in the country through the mud. That is what it knows how to do and that is all it knows how to do. That is its specialty. That is what it does for a living, which is why the corrosiveness of the House and of politics is something for which they bear an enormously heavy responsibility.

That is the Mr. Hyde side of the Conservative Party and that is the side we know. It comes out at night. It avoids us. It hits us on the television screens. Just as we are trying to fall asleep, we suddenly get hit with these vicious ads and a viciousness that is the real side of the Conservative Party.

I have another issue. My friend for Papineau has referred to it and I want to refer to it as well. I think of the issues that are facing the country. I think of the fact that we have a rapidly aging population that is going through a democratic revolution. I think of the fact that 50% of the people on reserves in northern Canada are under the age of 25. I look at the number of those young people who are coming into our cities, are living in poverty and have no jobs and no prospects. I look at climate change, which is affecting us as much as it is any other country and affecting northerners more than anyone else. When I think of those things, I do not see leadership from the government. I do not see leadership on health care, on climate change or on the real issues that are affecting the people of the country.

*Business of Supply*

As the member for Papineau said so well, there are literally tens of thousands of young people who are leaving high school, college and university without the prospect of a job. When I look at the cynicism opposite and I see that all the Conservatives are offering is a two year construction program that will do something for some people but will not deal with the fundamentals, then I say that we have less than we are worthy of as a country.

I think that is why so many of us have lost confidence in the government and have no intention of voting for it again, nor of voting for its half-baked measures and the corrosive cynicism that it has brought to the politics of this country, for which it should be deeply ashamed.

• (1700)

[Translation]

I am proud to serve a leader and an intelligent man who is compassionate and values human dignity and who talks about the importance of human integrity in his political discourse. That is something we sadly do not see in the politics of the Conservative Party, and it is something I regret very much.

But there is one thing I do not regret at all, and that is the decision we made as a party to say that enough is enough and that we will no longer support this government. We cannot support a government that does not support the Canadian people.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order. I see many people rising, so I will ask members who intervene to limit their questions to one minute. I recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will respect your wishes and keep this extremely short so that others can ask my colleague from across the way a question.

I was very pleased to be in the chamber to listen to him practice his upcoming leadership speech.

I do want to take issue very quickly with this whole business about corrosiveness and attack politics—

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

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. The member must hear the question. The government House leader has the floor.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Very quickly, Madam Speaker, I do have a bit of a memory. I remember June 2004 and the complete falsehoods of the Liberal Party of Canada. Perhaps my hon. colleague was still a New Democrat at that time, I do not remember, but I remember the ad campaigns that were run throughout June 2004.

I remember those ads that were absolute falsehoods, that soldiers would be in the streets and the fear campaign that the Liberal Party launched against our leader, the Prime Minister of Canada.

I wonder if he remembers that type of corrosive politics.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, there will be rough partisanship in debates and we all understand that.

I am featured in one of the government's latest ads and I am happy to see it. I am not taking any personal offence to it, but I do not think there could be any question that the fact that we have had an election style campaign going on over the last nine months on television belies this innocence that we see on the other side.

All of a sudden the Conservatives say to people, "Politics, good heavens. Elections, good, good, good grief". Then they come in here and give answers in question period that sound as if this other campaign is not going on. It is going on all the time and it comes out at night.

[Translation]

**Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, like my Conservative colleagues, I clearly see we are dealing with a Liberal Party leader. His speech contains some glaring contradictions with what he has told us.

On the one hand, the Liberals tell us they do not want an election and they want to try to find ways to solve our problems. On the other hand, they are the first to move a no-confidence motion against the Conservative government.

The big problem is that they have absolutely nothing to propose. Take Quebec as an example. When we look at the Conservatives and the Liberals, we see two faces with one vision. They are both in favour of creating a single securities commission in Toronto. They are both in favour of reducing the number of seats in Quebec, in favour of Ontario and Alberta. The leader of the Liberal Party supports the development of the oil sands. Proof of that lies in the fact that the Alberta government sent him a letter telling him that he was the oil sands' biggest advocate.

The more I look at the Liberals and the Conservatives, the more I realize that they are all the same.

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, I am not surprised that the member took advantage of this opportunity to spew more of the propaganda that is typical of the Bloc Québécois. However, the reality is that there are four parties in this House that have different opinions. We have taken our position and have said that we will vote against the government. If the other parties want to do the same, that is their decision, and if they choose not to, that is also their decision.

However, I can assure the member that there are many differences between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, just as there are between the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. We will see those differences in the days to come.

• (1705)

[English]

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member is very angry and I suppose he should be angry because his party used to have EI as a top priority and it no longer does. In fact, now it appears the top priority of the Liberals is playing chicken over an election that their party is clearly too divided to even fight. Members of his party have indicated that \$1 billion for EI is crumbs. I would like to ask the member if he believes that \$1 billion for the unemployed in this country is crumbs?



*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Bob Rae:** Madam Speaker, I will answer that question very directly. What the government is doing on employment insurance is inadequate and I will tell the member why.

What has been said by many government people and others is that the people who are going to be given the additional weeks of employment insurance do deserve it. I agree, they do deserve it, but the implication of what they are saying, and the member opposite knows this very well because he knows that this is an idea that has a long history in Conservative thinking, is that these people deserve it but there are other people who do not deserve it and they are not going to get it.

There are members across the way who are shaking their heads—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Outremont.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I was very interested in what previous members had to say, and I think that it would be useful at this juncture to remember why we are here tonight.

For three and a half years, we have had a Conservative minority government. Before that, we had a Liberal minority government. This is actually our second Conservative minority government. In other words, this is the third time that Canadians have decided to give their government a minority mandate. This is a sign that people want us to find ways to work together.

We just heard the Liberals talk about cynicism. The member for Toronto Centre said that it is not working anymore and that people have become too cynical about politics. I would like to review a number of very relevant facts.

[English]

The minister across the way made the point well before in response to one of the Liberal members when he said that this is an attempt to make Parliament work. That is exactly what Canadians are expecting of their elected officials.

The NDP has consistently stood up for its principles in voting for the things that the people who put us here have asked us to do. Let us look at what the Liberals have actually done in the last couple of months.

These are the same Liberals who love to waive their index fingers under other people's noses. They voted to remove a woman's right to equal pay for work of equal value. They voted to destroy the Navigable Waters Protection Act. We voted against it and if this type of thing ever comes up again, members know that we will vote against it again.

What is on the table today is \$1 billion for employment insurance that the leader of the New Democratic Party was able to obtain when he held out his hand and said, "We want to work in the public interest. We want to make Parliament function. We cannot go through a situation where Canada has an annual general election".

Rather than spending \$350 million on an election that nobody wants and that probably will not change anything, we are going to be

putting \$1 billion into the pockets of 190,000 Canadian families. That is what we were put here to do.

I was listening before when the member for Papineau stood and started talking about all his ancestors and his relatives who had been in this House. There is an old Irish expression that when the only thing people can talk about is their ancestors, they are a little bit like a potato. Everything that they have of interest is under the ground.

However, let us look at the actual dossier, the actual results of the Liberals on the environment, shall we? Talk about corrosive cynicism.

They signed the Kyoto protocol. I was listening as the member for Toronto Centre got weepy, got teary-eyed in his defence of the former leader, the one that he helped backstab. He got teary-eyed about what a wonderful man he was. Let us look at what he did when he was environment minister, and let us look at what Eddie Goldenberg admitted the Liberals had done in signing Kyoto.

In the spring of 2007, Eddie Goldenberg, the former chief of staff to Jean Chrétien, gave a speech—

• (1710)

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I suggest that the hon. member take great care when commenting on the actions and intentions of the previous speaker.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Of course, Madam Speaker. Just to clarify, I was referring to the fact that they joined forces against him to replace him. But when that did not work, they ended up with the one they have now.

Before you intervened, I was saying that they signed the Kyoto protocol. In his book and his speech to the Chamber of Commerce of London, Ontario, this is what Eddie Goldenberg said.

[English]

He said, "We never had a plan to institute Kyoto. We only signed it to galvanize public opinion". The Liberals signed it for purely political purposes. It was a public relations stunt. Instead of having the record that the Liberals believe they have on the environment, their real record on the environment is the worst in the world.

While the Liberals were in power for 13 years, instead of reducing greenhouse gases by 6% as mandated by the Kyoto protocol that the Liberals signed hypocritically, they increased Canada's greenhouse gas production by 35%. That is their record. The worst record in the world.

That is political cynicism. That, above and beyond any other consideration, is the reason that the Liberals were turfed. They talk a good game. They will say absolutely anything that they think needs to be said to get themselves elected and once in power they do not do a thing.

We are supposed to feel that when they signed the Kelowna accord that it was a great achievement. That was after 13 years and it gave nothing. They are still crying today, saying that they really wished that they had a fifth mandate so that they could continue to do nothing.

*Business of Supply*

I know about the Kelowna accord. I was sitting in cabinet in Quebec City when it was signed. The Kelowna accord was about the election of the Liberal Party of Canada. It was not about helping first nations because for 13 years those members did nothing to help first nations.

That is the sad reality and the record of the Liberal Party of Canada. All talk, no action. That party has never accomplished a thing.

That is exactly what happened this summer when they took one of their loudest and least productive members, someone who was passed over for cabinet in three successive majorities, stuck her in a room with their loudest and least productive member and lo and behold nothing happened.

What was required to get a result on employment insurance for Canadians, for the families who need it? A responsible political party, the NDP, to stand up and say, "We are fighting for Canadians". Many people have lost their jobs during this economic crisis. Families need help. What are we going to do?

We held out our hand. We discussed. We obtained \$935 million for 190,000 families. The Liberals are going to try to give us morality lessons. Not on your life, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** It being 5:15 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea,

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

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

• (1740)

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

(*Division No. 110*)

## YEAS

Members

André  
Asselin  
Bagnell

Andrews  
Bachand  
Bains

Beaudin  
Bellavance  
Bevilacqua  
Blais  
Bouchard  
Brisson  
Byrne  
Cardin  
Cotler  
Cuzner  
DeBellefeuille  
Deschamps  
Dhaliwal  
Dion  
Dosanjh  
Duceppe  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Eyking  
Folco  
Freeman  
Gagnon  
Gaudet  
Guarnieri  
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)  
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)  
Hall Findlay  
Ignatieff  
Kania  
Kennedy  
Laframboise  
Lavallée  
Lemay  
Lévesque  
Malhi  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
McGuinly  
McTeague  
Mendes  
Mourani  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Neville  
Ouellet  
Paillé  
Patry  
Plamondon  
Proulx  
Ratansi  
Rodriguez  
Roy  
Savage  
Sgro  
Simms  
Szabo  
Trudeau  
Vincent  
Wilfert  
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Pearson  
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Rae  
Regan  
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Tonks  
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Wrzesnewskyj

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Members

Abbott  
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Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
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Calkins  
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Arthur  
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Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Davidson  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)

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

[English]

**UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON ANIMAL WELFARE****Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.)** moved:

Motion No. 354

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should support the development and adoption of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare at the United Nations as well as at all relevant international organizations and forums.

She said: Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to rise today to present Motion No. 354.

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Burnaby—Douglas who had a similar motion on the order paper. The member graciously agreed to withdraw his motion so I could proceed with the motion we are debating today.

I would also like to thank my caucus colleague, the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, for her continued support and counsel. She is extremely passionate about this issue and I am grateful for all of her support.

World Animal Week is set to begin next week, making the debate of this motion extremely timely for Canada to vote to support the development of a universal declaration on animal welfare, or UDAW.

What is the universal declaration on animal welfare? To put it simply, it is an agreement among people and nations to recognize that animals are sentient, suffer, have welfare needs and to ultimately end animal cruelty worldwide.

The UDAW refers to the welfare of sentient animals. Sentience is the capacity to have feelings and to experience suffering and pleasure. It implies a level of conscious awareness. Scientific research indicates that all vertebrates are animals. This is an active research area and knowledge of sentience among species continues to grow.

More than a billion people rely on animals for their livelihoods and even more for job and food security. For many others, animals are companions that enrich their lives. While it has been proven that animals can feel pain and do suffer, global recognition of the significance of animal welfare remains virtually non-existent.

The UDAW will be structured as a set of general principles that acknowledge and emphasize the importance of animal welfare. The purpose of these principles is to encourage all nations to put in place or enhance existing animal welfare laws and standards. The UDAW will not be binding legislation and does not, therefore, attribute legal rights to animals.

A draft text was developed at the Manila Conference on Animal Welfare in March 2003 and at the Costa Rica steering committee meeting in November 2005. This is the basis for work on the drafting of a universal declaration on animal welfare and is in part based on the following:

Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Glover
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mark
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young — 144

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I declare the motion lost.

The New Democratic Party whip on a point of order.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the recorded division that just took place, no NDP member rose to vote on the Liberal opposition motion. I would like to inform all members that every member of the NDP caucus was present for this vote, and that our abstention reflects our desire to support unemployed workers rather than the Liberals' wish for an election.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I see where the member is coming from, but it is not a point of order.

It being 5:45 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

*Private Members' Business*

That animal welfare is an issue worth consideration by governments.

That the promotion of animal welfare requires collective action and all stakeholders and affected parties must be involved.

That work on animal welfare is a continuous process....

RECOGNIZING that animals are living, sentient beings and therefore deserve due consideration and respect;

RECOGNIZING that animal welfare includes animal health [and that veterinarians have an essential role in maintaining both the health and welfare of animals];

RECOGNIZING that humans [inhabit] this planet with other species and other forms of life and that all forms of life co-exist within an interdependent ecosystem;...

ACKNOWLEDGING that the humane use of animals can have major benefits for humans;

This draft text also outlines the principles of the declaration as being:

1. The welfare of animals shall be a common objective for all [states];

2. The standards of animal welfare attained by each [state] shall be promoted, recognized and observed by improved measures, nationally and internationally. [Whilst there are significant social, economic and cultural differences between societies, each should care for and treat animals in a humane and sustainable manner] [in accordance with the principles of the Declaration];

3. All appropriate steps shall be taken by [states] to prevent cruelty to animals and to reduce their suffering; 4. Appropriate standards on the welfare of animals be further developed and elaborated such as, but not limited to, those governing the use and management of farm animals, companion animals, animals in scientific research, draught animals, wildlife animals and animals in recreation.

● (1745)

The next phase in securing international recognition of the welfare of animals is for this non-binding agreement to be endorsed at the United Nations. The achievement of this declaration would be a groundbreaking step toward improvements for animals around the world and would act as a catalyst for change for animals in the following areas:

In the area of environmental sustainability, responsible animal management provides a positive impact on land use, climate change, pollution, water supplies, habitat conservation and biodiversity.

In the area of human health, proper animal care reduces the risk of disease transmission to humans and food poisoning. The human-animal bond also has proven therapeutic effects.

In the area of disaster management, animals are critical elements of many people's livelihoods, food security and cultural awareness. It is essential that protection be considered in disaster reduction preparedness and response policies.

In the area of poverty and hunger reduction, caring for animals appropriately improves productivity and helps farmers to provide food for themselves, their families and their communities.

In the area of social development, people's attitudes and behaviour toward animals overlap with their attitudes and behaviour toward each other.

The UDAW is supported by a growing list of government and key ministries from countries around the world including all 27 members of the European Union, as well as New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Fiji, Croatia, Cambodia, Bahrain, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Norway and Thailand.

There is also a great deal of support from the public. More than 50,000 Canadians have signed petitions in support of a UDAW.

Many of these petitions have been presented in the House of Commons. The UDAW is actively supported by Canada's foremost animal protection organizations including the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

Some may ask why we need a declaration now. In recent years our understanding of animal sentience has progressed dramatically. As a result, animal welfare has developed into an issue that demands immediate attention. The scientific basis of sentience is directly linked to an ethical concern for animal welfare.

There is currently no acknowledgement by the international community of animal welfare being an issue of importance. Neither the scientific findings regarding sentience nor the links between animal welfare and human development have been recognized.

Positive change for animals will follow recognition of animal welfare. Improving animal welfare will have a positive impact on human welfare. Reducing the pain and suffering that humans can inflict on animals will guide our relationship with them. The UDAW represents a new national beginning for our relationship with animals.

The achievement of the declaration is an important step and will act as a catalyst for change in the following ways: by raising the status of animal welfare as an international issue; by encouraging all governments to establish or improve national animal welfare legislation and its implementation; by encouraging those industries which utilize animals to keep their welfare at the forefront of their policies and practices; and finally, by inspiring positive change in public attitudes and actions toward animals.

It is important to emphasize two points. First, the UDAW has yet to be finalized and is only in a draft form. The purpose of this motion is to urge the government to involve itself in the continued development of the text and to support it. Second, the UDAW is a non-binding resolution. Its purpose is to persuade other nations without animal protection legislation to put some in place.

The development of and support for a universal declaration on animal welfare does have an obvious relationship to the cruelty to animals legislation, but will not have a cause and effect relationship. As I mentioned before, the UDAW is a non-binding resolution. The passage of UDAW would not force any changes to our animal welfare laws that we do not as a nation choose to enact ourselves.

● (1750)

As for countries such as ours which have animal welfare legislation, it would provide an excellent opportunity to review current legislation to identify areas of improvement. We know that an update of our animal welfare laws is long overdue, although some work has already taken place.

*Private Members' Business*

A great deal of legislation has been introduced and debated in this House over the past number of years. Sadly, of all that legislation introduced, only Bill S-203 was successful in becoming law. While critics say that bill does not go far enough, which is something I concur with, I do think it is a small step in a positive direction.

It is my hope that this motion can be another step to influence not only Canada but the international community as well.

A universal declaration on animal welfare is not a conclusion; it is a beginning. It is a signal that, as a global community, we recognize the importance of animals in our lives and the positive impact they have on our way of life. It is a demonstration of our understanding that treating animals humanely is a benefit to our entire society. Supporting a UDAW is a simple, moral and principled action Canada could take with ease.

I strenuously urge all members to support Motion No. M-354.

• (1755)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague from Scarborough Southwest to explain why she stated that should the Canadian government develop and adopt a universal declaration on animal welfare, UDAW, it would not be binding.

**Mrs. Michelle Simson:** Mr. Speaker, as I stated in the speech, it is not binding. It is a resolution. It is an understanding and an acknowledgement how we as a nation feel about the welfare of animals.

Canada has led in so many areas in so many ways. I think it is time we got with the program on this. We are so far behind. There have been eight animal rights bills in as many years introduced in this House and only one bill has passed.

A declaration would be an excellent start. It would not be binding but, symbolically, it would say everything about us as a nation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech on the motion before us, but I had some trouble understanding the link between her speech and her party's position on Bill S-203.

If I am not mistaken, the Liberals and the NDP opposed that bill. Obviously, Bill S-203 did not go as far as we would have liked, but it at least made it possible to end the status quo.

Why did the Liberals introduce this motion today? When it was time to make the necessary legislative changes, the Liberal Party remained seated.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Michelle Simson:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to that one bill, Bill S-203, it originated in the other place. It was extremely misleading in that it lulled Canadians into thinking that we were accomplishing something. For the most part, all parties were disappointed that it lacked any kind of depth or teeth.

This is a resolution. This is a commitment that we are looking for, which it is hoped will be heard around the world. This is about something we believe in as a nation, protecting animals, protecting those that have no ability to protect themselves.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Scarborough Southwest for introducing this motion this afternoon. It is a topic that I have an interest in as well.

I wonder if she could say a little bit more about how this might influence the debate in Canada around animal welfare. We know the UDAW would not be a binding resolution, should it be adopted, but how might this raise the level of debate in Canada around animal welfare issues? What might it bring to that discussion that would be helpful for us when we finally get around to modernizing our animal cruelty laws here in Canada? We know that needs to be done. We have been disappointed by the efforts to do that in the past.

How could this international discussion influence our discussion here in Canada?

**Mrs. Michelle Simson:** Mr. Speaker, it raises awareness of an issue that has not received enough time in the spotlight. It will also bring about discussion on the transport of animals and health safety. Given the fact that we are dealing with H1N1, which was called swine flu, all of these things come into play. This motion will put this whole issue into the spotlight, which it deserves.

• (1800)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada takes issues of animal welfare seriously, and it strongly pursues issues of animal protection. For this reason, our government is actively involved in issues of animal welfare, both on the domestic level and internationally.

Canada has long contributed to the development of international standards for animal health and welfare. Since taking up the request of member countries to become the lead international organization for animal welfare, the World Organisation for Animal Health has become the main international institution for advancing the development of science-based animal welfare standards and thus for improving the well-being and care of animals worldwide.

The World Organisation for Animal Health has formulated a number of international guidelines for the humane slaughter of animals, killing for disease control and for the transport of animals by air, land and sea.

As a member of the World Organisation for Animal Health, Canada supported that body's Resolution XIV of May 2007, in which it was decided to support in principle the development of a universal declaration on animal welfare calling on countries to acknowledge the importance of animal welfare. The same resolution recognized that the World Organisation for Animal Health is the established international animal welfare standard-setting body.

*Private Members' Business*

Our government wants to make sure that the subject of animal welfare continues to be given the attention it deserves and that positive progress continues to be made in order to improve the well-being of animals as an end in itself. For this reason, we support in principle the development of the universal declaration on animal welfare as a reflection of Canadians' commitment to the well-being of animals and this government's vigorous commitment to their protection.

However, while the development of a universal declaration on animal welfare is a laudable goal, we do not believe that the United Nations is the appropriate forum to address this issue. The United Nations Charter does not give the United Nations a mandate to address issues relating to animal welfare. Rather, the United Nations focuses its efforts on matters more immediately related to human welfare, such as peace and security, human rights and economic development. To suggest a new mandate for the United Nations would carry the risk of further stretching that organization's already expansive responsibilities and it would be inconsistent with Canada's strong efforts to improve the effectiveness and focus of the United Nations in its mandated areas of activity.

This government is committed to ensuring that the United Nations pursues a course of reform to become more effective, more accountable and more democratic. We have made this a priority in our engagement with the organization. These reform efforts are wide-ranging and comprehensive, to achieve an organization that is more responsive to the challenges of today.

We actively support institutional reform of key United Nations organizations, including the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and of course the Security Council. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated, we must make the Security Council more effective, more accessible and more flexible, more adaptable to the challenges and opportunities of a broader international community.

This government is committed to ensuring that the structure of the United Nations meets the needs of the 21st century. We push for greater progress in the United Nations business practices and management practices to improve the accountability and efficiency of that institution, and we support the streamlining of working methods to make the United Nations more relevant in international discourse.

For Canada, the United Nations remains indispensable for addressing the many global challenges that confront us today. Canada's current priorities include progress on peace and security, economic development, human rights, climate change and terrorism.

From the very founding of the United Nations, Canada has contributed ideas, energy and resources to help the United Nations accomplish its mandate. Today, our government is contributing to peace and security and making significant sacrifices in United Nations-mandated operations, in areas ranging from Afghanistan to Sudan to Haiti. All told, more than 3,000 Canadian soldiers, police officers, diplomats, aid workers and experts in correctional services and justice are currently deployed in the United Nations-led or United Nations-mandated missions worldwide.

Mr. Speaker, could I ask my colleague to complete this speech due to the cough that I have?

● (1805)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreeable to the House that the member for Yorkton—Melville be allowed to complete the remarks of the parliamentary secretary?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian activism on the issue of animal welfare could detract from the pursuit of these clear Canadian priorities, keeping in mind that the process of lobbying for support and negotiating texts at the United Nations can be a lengthy and energy consuming process.

For these reasons, the government prefers to see the important issue of animal welfare addressed by international institutions other than the United Nations and not be diminished in their importance, institutions which are already focused on this issue and have made valuable progress on this issue already.

The primary such institution is the World Organisation for Animal Health, of which Canada is an active and founding member. In this capacity, Canada already actively works to coordinate its activities with those of the international community, including through the development and implementation of international standards.

It is appropriate for Canada to continue its approach on animal welfare issues through this existing framework, rather than proposing a new mandated area of responsibility for the United Nations. This is not our role in the international community of member nations.

The government believes strongly that the World Organisation for Animal Health should continue to be the primary established international body for developing and improving science-based animal welfare standards.

The government supports the principle and general spirit of the motion and recognizes the laudable goals of a universal declaration on animal welfare. However, government support of this motion must be on condition that reference to the United Nations be removed as this issue is best dealt with by an existing organization responsible for animal welfare issues, the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Furthermore, I have to raise the important fact that any universal declaration on animal welfare could potentially carry long-term consequences, which we are not today in a position to predict. Because there is at present no accepted international text for such a declaration, such a text must first be negotiated by the appropriate international body. The final document could conceivably include provisions that the current proponents would never have intended, or they could include provisions that would be contrary to the national interests of Canada and the well-being of Canadians.

It would be unwise for Canada to commit itself to adopting a certain document under international negotiation before being fully able to assess that document's implications on domestic law. For that reason, the government could only support this motion if it were made clear that we support the underlying principle, but that we maintain the flexibility to be able to judge the final document based on its content rather than on its spirit.

*Private Members' Business*

This position is consistent with our government's approach to this issue in 2007, when we supported, in principle, the development of a universal declaration on animal welfare at the World Organisation for Animal Health. We continue to support this goal.

I therefore move that Motion No. 354 be amended as follows:

That, the words "at the United Nations as well as" be removed, that the words "and adoption" be removed, and that the words "in principle" be inserted in its place.

The motion would then read as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should support, in principle, the development of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare at all relevant international organizations and forums.

• (1810)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3) no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent.

Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest if she consents to the amendment being moved.

**Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.):** Yes, I do consent, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment is in order.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate with the amendment.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion M-354 to support the development and adoption of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare at the United Nations.

We are in favour of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare at the United Nations, provided an in-depth study is done. The Bloc Québécois is aware that animals are living beings and that it is important to respect them and treat them with dignity. That is why we are supporting a universal declaration on animal welfare in principle.

The purpose of this declaration is to develop a series of principles acceptable to all those who recognize that animal welfare is a major issue with respect to the social development of nations worldwide.

The Universal Declaration of Animal Rights was formally proclaimed in Paris on October 15, 1978, at UNESCO headquarters. This universal declaration is a philosophical position on the relationship that should henceforth exist between humans and animals. The text was revised by the International League of Animal Rights in 1989 and published in 1990.

The Bloc supports the international efforts made. It also believes that cruelty towards animals is unacceptable and that the federal government must take action to ensure that it is roundly condemned. In recent parliaments, our party has carefully examined the issue of bolstering the law in order to explicitly condemn animal abuse and to put an end to cruel breeding operations.

Although some amendments were recently made to the Criminal Code, the Bloc Québécois believes we must do more and it is in favour of a real reform of the animal cruelty provisions.

The current maximum sentences under the Criminal Code are too lenient for the seriousness of the acts committed.

The Bloc also favours making the ban on owning animals indefinite in order to prevent certain foreseeable animal abuse from taking place. A breeder who has been found guilty of mistreatment should not have the right to re-open a kennel the day after being sentenced. We call those operations puppy mills.

Above all the Bloc Québécois feels that the definition of the term animal should be included in the Criminal Code. At present, the section on cruelty to animals is found under property offences. That does not seem to reflect today's reality.

That is why, during committee study of Bill S-203, the Bloc Québécois proposed the idea of introducing a definition of what an animal is, sought to protect stray as well as domestic animals, wanted to clarify the criterion for negligence, thereby making it easier to prove, and proposed an amendment to formally ban training cocks to fight.

Unfortunately, the Bloc's proposed amendments were rejected and the committee agreed on February 14, 2008, to report the bill without amendments.

That did not stop the Bloc Québécois from supporting Bill S-203 in that it was a small but real step in the right direction and it did not prevent the possible study and adoption of a more comprehensive bill in line with Bill C-50. The NDP tried to kill the bill.

• (1815)

But Bill S-203 would have helped protect animals from certain forms of cruelty—one of the concerns of the Bloc Québécois—and would have increased the maximum penalties set out in the Criminal Code to reflect the seriousness of the crime, sent a message to people who mistreat animals, and sent a message to judges who would have had to take this into account in their sentences. In fact, the seriousness of a crime is partly determined by the maximum penalty a criminal may be subject to.

Bill S-203 also enabled judges to prohibit an individual found guilty from owning or residing with animals for a period of five years, and to order the offender to reimburse the costs incurred by their actions. Lastly, Bill S-203 did not threaten legitimate activities involving the death of an animal, such as agriculture, hunting and fishing.

The NDP and the Liberals had some twisted logic. Instead of voting in favour of improving the bill—it is true that there is more to be done—they preferred to stick to the status quo that they so fiercely protest. They passed up a perfect opportunity to participate in the advancement of animal rights.

*Private Members' Business*

If the NDP and the Liberals truly had animal protection at heart, they would have acted differently. They would have followed the Bloc Québécois' example and acted responsibly. Although the Bloc Québécois is aware of the limitations of Bill S-203, it finds that this bill is a small but real step in the right direction, and does not hinder the possible study and adoption of another, more comprehensive bill.

The Bloc Québécois is making no secret of this. It is in favour of a real reform of the animal cruelty provisions and will seriously study any proposals brought forward on this matter again.

The Bloc was particularly in favour of the principle of Bill C-50, which would have created a new section in the Criminal Code to address cruelty to animals, removing this topic from the sections of the code that deal with property.

In closing, of course we support the principle of Motion M-354. We think it is important to adopt a universal declaration of animal welfare, but we also think we must go further. As legislators, we must go ahead with a real reform of the Criminal Code in order to really address the fundamental problem of cruelty to animals.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, given the circumstances of the parliamentary secretary who spoke earlier and who had to leave because he was coughing and had handed his speech to the member for Yorkton—Melville, if you sought it, I think you would find unanimous consent that, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville be allowed to speak a second time to Motion No. 354.

• (1820)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the debate on Motion No. 354 moved by the member for Scarborough Southwest and now amended by the Conservative member for Yorkton—Melville. I am glad this is happening. There is a lot of co-operation happening in the House this evening on this important motion.

This speaks well of the ability of members to co-operate and get important work done in this place. We do not hear about that very often these days about Parliament and I am pleased we have had the opportunity to co-operate together to get this issue on the agenda and to make progress toward a universal declaration on animal welfare and Canada's participation in that process.

When the member for Scarborough Southwest began her remarks, she noted that I had on the order paper a very similar motion to her original motion and had agreed to withdraw it so she could use her place in private members' business to see this issue debated. I very happily did that.

It is great that we are able to see this issue debated and I am glad she was able to bring it forward, with the co-operation of her colleagues.

Then this evening the government put forward a proposal that would make the motion something that it would be able to support.

We have all heard the proposal, looked at it and agreed this should go forward.

I am glad we have a working motion, an amended motion, to consider here, which seems to have received co-operation from many corners of the House.

I first heard about the universal declaration on animal welfare when I met with representatives from the World Society for the Protection of Animals several years ago. I had not heard about this important initiative prior to that meeting. I was glad to meet with the folks from WSPA and hear about it.

WSPA is one of the world's largest alliances of animal welfare organizations and it continues to grow. Right now it is around 850 member societies in over 150 countries, which is a very significant group of animal welfare organizations.

WSPA and its key partners are acting as the secretariat for the group of steering committee governments championing the initiative in their respective regions of the world. Therefore, WSPA is very involved in the promotion of the universal declaration on animal welfare.

It has many key partners: the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Humane Society International, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Compassion in World Farming. It also has support from over 300 of WSPA's member societies.

Therefore, a significant group of organizations deal with animal welfare issues around the world that are supporting this initiative and support the activity of WSPA.

The UDAW, as we heard already this evening, is an agreement among nations to recognize that animals are sentient and can suffer, and to respect their welfare and to end animal cruelty. These are all important goals that merit being debated in this place and in other parliaments and assemblies around the world and in other organizations that deal with animal welfare around the world.

The UDAW is proposed to be a non-binding set of basic principles that would encourage all nations to put in place improved animal welfare laws and standards, a set of guidelines and recommendations that we can judge our own efforts in our country and in countries around the world.

It is suggested by the organizers that the final destination for the UDAW is the General Assembly of the United Nations. We have heard this evening that the government takes some issue with that. Our government has taken the position that the United Nations might not be the appropriate venue for this resolution.



That is something we can debate and it merits consideration. The government has made the point that it believes the United Nations should be about human relationships and human activities. I think the people who support the universal declaration on animal welfare will say that the interdependence between animals and humans is so intimate that this is something of direct concern to humanity and should be debated at the world body of this planet.

Therefore, I think this is an argument about which we will hear more. There is nothing in the amended resolution that does not preclude us winning that argument and seeing that the United Nations would be deemed even by our own government as relevant international organization or forum. I look forward to that continuing discussion.

● (1825)

Sentience is defined as the capacity to have feelings and to experience suffering and pleasure. It implies a level of conscious awareness. The recognition of sentience in animals is a crucial bottom line in dealing with animal welfare issues.

Animal welfare discussions are also guided by five freedoms that are stated in the draft of the universal declaration on animal welfare. Those five freedoms are described as freedom from hunger; freedom from thirst and malnutrition; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.

I think we can all appreciate why those are all very crucial to the well-being of an animal. Their basic care, their basic needs, the freedom from pain, injury and disease, and the freedom to express their normal pattern of behaviour are all things that make sense. They are very basic freedoms that I think are easy to appreciate.

Going back to the whole issue of the interdependence of animals and human beings, the humane use of animals benefits people. We know this from our experience here in Canada and around the world. People rely on animals for their livelihoods, jobs and food security. We know that responsible animal management provides a positive impact on land use, climate change, pollution, water supplies, habitat conservation and biodiversity.

Our relationship with animals has a direct effect on our environment, and that opens up a whole other argument about the appropriate forum for the discussion of the universal declaration on animal welfare. I would contend that when we think about that appropriate forum, it puts the UN back in the picture.

Proper animal care reduces the risk of diseases transmittable to humans, improves productivity and helps farmers provide food for their communities. That direct link between animals and humans is further extended by those issues of disease transmission, the productivity of our farms, food production, and the need for food security in our communities.

Already a number of countries have supported the development of this initiative and the list of those countries is growing all the time. Back in March, the European Union formally announced its support for the UDAW through the council conclusion endorsed by all 27 EU agriculture members. In 2007, the World Organisation for Animal Health, which represents the chief veterinarians of 69

### *Private Members' Business*

countries including Canada, voted unanimously in favour of developing a universal declaration on animal welfare.

There is support in many countries and organizations among professionals who deal with animals. I think that it makes sense for us to be discussing this here in the House of Commons in Canada and to be lending our support to the development of this important new international declaration.

We know that here in Canada we have had issues regarding the improvement of our legislation on cruelty to animals. We have debated it. We have tried a number of times to come up with new legislation and to update legislation that dates from two centuries ago. It is very old legislation. Some attempt was made and some of the penalties were updated, but the overall legislation still needs our attention.

We hope that we might find a way to do that here in Parliament and do it effectively. I believe that discussing and achieving a universal declaration on animal welfare will stimulate that further discussion here in Canada and give us cause to judge our attempts by this international declaration. I think that it will put our own efforts in a broader context and also challenge us to do more in the area of preventing animal cruelty and in speaking up for animal welfare in this country.

I am pleased to have had this discussion. I am glad that there seems to be a spirit of cooperation to see that this will move forward in the best possible way. I want to thank the member for Scarborough Southwest again for introducing this and making sure that it got on our agenda here in the House of Commons.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part in this debate on Motion M-354, which was moved by my colleague, the member for Scarborough Southwest. I congratulate her on her initiative. I would also like to thank and congratulate the NDP member representing the riding of Burnaby—Douglas for agreeing to withdraw his own motion so that my colleague from Scarborough Southwest could move hers.

For the sake of the people who do not know how these things work, I want to explain that there is a draw for private members' business. Each member is given a rank, and items are considered in order of rank. The member for Burnaby—Douglas had a lower rank than the member for Scarborough Southwest, which meant that my colleague had a greater chance of having her motion debated in the House than the member for Burnaby—Douglas did. I congratulate and thank him.

I just recently became interested in animal cruelty and animal welfare issues. I have to admit that I was like many Canadians. I have had cats, dogs and birds. I treated them well, but was unaware of existing Canadian and international legislation. Then some of my fellow citizens came to see me, people from my riding who were passionate about animal welfare. They wanted to strengthen and modernize Canadian legislation. They are the ones who ignited my passion.

*Private Members' Business*

Currently, the importance of animal welfare is not recognized on a global scale. I think that the parliamentary secretary mentioned that earlier in his remarks.

Adopting a universal animal rights declaration would create not a legal obligation but a moral one for governments, prompting them to take steps to ensure that animals in their respective countries are protected.

People's attitudes and behaviour toward animals mirror their treatment of other people. Animals cannot defend themselves, so we must act on their behalf.

There is both scientific consensus and public acknowledgement that animals feel pain and can suffer.

I believe that we must do all we can to prevent cruelty to animals and minimize their suffering.

Moreover, responsible, cruelty-free treatment of animals has a positive impact on land use, climate change, pollution, the water supply, habitat preservation and biodiversity. I am not alone in believing this; other members of the House have said so, and scientific studies back up these claims.

Over a billion of the world's people owe their living to animals. Many other people have pets. Taking proper care of animals reduces the risk of transmitting diseases to humans and of food poisoning.

• (1835)

[*English*]

MPs wore orange ribbons yesterday to recognize World Animal Week which will officially kickoff next week on October 4 and is a yearly reminder to make the world a safer, more compassionate place for all animals. It is a celebration of animals that helps to raise awareness and standards of animal welfare worldwide. It is also a chance to make the world a safer, more compassionate place for all animals.

As was mentioned by the parliamentary secretary of the government, the Chief Veterinary Officer of Canada is a member of the World Animal Health Organization and in May 2007 that organization voted unanimously in favour of adopting a UDAW, a universal declaration for animal welfare. Within Canada, UDAW is supported by many organizations and I would like to mention a few: the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Humane Society of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies and its many member societies, Animal Alliance of Canada, Global Action Network, British Columbia, Ontario and Canadian SPCAs, and the SPCA de l'Estrie.

Those are just some Canadian organizations that support Canada helping to develop and adopt a universal declaration for animal welfare across the world. There are some two million people around the world who have signed petitions to this effect.

I am not going to go on much longer except to say that I would encourage my colleagues to support this motion. It appears that the government will support the motion as it has been amended, a friendly amendment, accepted by the sponsor of the motion, the member for Scarborough Southwest.

I heard what the member from the Bloc had to say and I agree with him. Our Criminal Code provisions need to be modernized, those which deal with the protection of animals and those that deal with cruelty to animals. They are two centuries behind. However, adopting this motion, I believe, will help further stimulate debate and interest into the whole issue of how we protect our animals both here in Canada and outside of Canada.

I believe we will gain more and more support to bring pressure to the government, whichever party is there, if it is not the current party which acts, then whatever party follows this one and forms the government, to modernize our Criminal Code provisions dealing with cruelty to animals and to modernize our regulations dealing with the transport of animals.

Under our regulations animals can be transported for 52 consecutive hours. The United States has modernized its regulations regarding the transportation of animals and in the United States animals can only be transported for 28 hours. That is a major difference. Those extra hours would have a major impact on how stressful the animals are mentally and physically. It would definitely have an impact on the health of those animals and subsequently, if they are animals that go into the food chain, it could have an impact on humans themselves.

I am hopeful that the House will adopt the motion unanimously. It would send a powerful statement to the government but also to Canadians that their elected officials are serious about improving our laws and regulations to better protect our animals.

I want to thank again my super colleague from Scarborough Southwest for taking up this issue, for championing this issue. She has done a wonderful job. I want to thank again the member for Burnaby—Douglas for being such a great guy on this, for understanding the importance. It was more important to get this motion debated and voted on in the House quickly than to have so-called ownership of it.

• (1840)

Everyone here who supports this will own this motion. Everyone here who supports this motion and who votes for this motion can proudly go back to their ridings and tell their constituents, "This is a motion that I supported, this is a motion that I want the rest of you to get onboard with and help me push forward with the government".

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the member for Scarborough Southwest for bringing forth this motion.

The Government of Canada takes issues of animal welfare very seriously indeed and is committed to improving the living standards of animals both here at home and around the globe. I will highlight some of the various ways in which our government has already acted on this issue.

Before I do that, I want to mention that I represent a riding in Saskatchewan that is heavily dependent on agriculture. It is important to know what impact this declaration will have on farmers and ranchers of all types. They hold me, as their representative, responsible to ask the question, what impact will this have on those who are in these occupations?

Our government along with the provinces enforce humane slaughter regulations which apply in federally and provincially registered facilities. We also uphold humane transport regulations which apply throughout Canada, whether by land, air or sea. Canadian livestock and poultry producers, livestock haulers and processors have made great strides to improve farm animal welfare, such as the certified livestock training program for livestock and poultry transporters.

Moreover, this government has taken a number of steps to improve animal welfare over the years. For instance, we have amended protocols for the seal harvest and we have tightened sanctions against acts of animal cruelty through provisions in the Criminal Code.

Our government is continuing to carry out innovative research in conjunction with universities to explore ways to assess and improve the welfare of animals on farms, including improving housing conditions for livestock. The National Farm Animal Care Council provides a key means to ensure the well-being of farm animals in Canada.

With respect to animals used in research, the federal granting agencies have set requirements that animals must be handled in accordance with the principles and guidelines set out by the Canadian Council on Animal Care.

These and a number of other related initiatives continue to be supported and advanced under the responsibilities of my hon. colleague, the Minister of Agriculture.

With our partners in the provinces, a wide variety of similar steps have been taken to address this issue to ensure that a high standard of animal welfare in Canada is vigorously pursued. For instance, provincial veterinary licensing bodies have taken steps to encourage veterinarians to report instances of animal abuse.

Lastly, there are a number of non-governmental organizations in Canada that are actively working toward improving animal welfare. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, to name one, has identified animal welfare as a top priority and has produced a series of animal welfare position statements.

I see my time is up. I will finish my speech next time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in these adjournment proceedings and specifically relate back to a question that I had asked in the spring

session, a question that was prompted, I guess, by some of the selective amnesia on the other side of the chamber. Maybe I will use my four minutes to provide a bit of background as a reminder.

The question I had posed was about the banking system which, at that time, the finance minister was taking great credit for the situation that we found ourselves in here with the meltdown in the United States, south of the border. Our banking system was in relatively strong shape and he was taking the bows and being very self-congratulatory about that.

History shows that a great number on the other side, some now in cabinet on the other side, were some of the greatest champions of the deregulation at the time. They wanted to see the banks go global. They wanted to see them grow. They wanted to see them take on the face of Citibank. That is exactly what those people on the other side were advocating and pushing for.

However, it was successive Liberal governments that did not yield to that type of pressure, that did not yield to compromise the regulatory regime that had been in place, and it was our past prime minister, Jean Chrétien. In retrospect, in hindsight it was absolutely the proper decision to make at the time and, fortunately, Canadians are the benefactors of that strength, that wisdom and that courage that he showed in ensuring that regulatory regime stayed in place.

That is nothing new. History shows that with regard to his decision on Iraq. The people across the floor thought that we should have been there with the Americans but, no, at that time, Prime Minister Chrétien stood his ground and made the right decision, and I think Canadians know that fully now. One on one, I think they on the other side of the chamber might even admit it.

I could go on and on. There was the G20. When I look at the Prime Minister just back from his talks last week, one would think that he invented the G20. However, when Paul Martin was putting forth the importance of developing a G20 including those developing countries, he was vilified by the current Prime Minister saying that multilateralism is so yesterday and that it was a sign of weakness in this nation.

Time after time, issue after issue, whether we look at income trusts or broken promises to widows, there have been problems. The reason for the non-confidence motion today is that we do not get straight answers from the government. There is no recollection of its history and no regard for fact.

I will pose my question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. When can Canadians expect to get truthful answers, facts, from the government—

• (1845)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member across the way talked about support for bank mergers. There was a member of the House of Commons who did support the bank mergers. In fact, he said, “The mindset was, we need to be more global, more like Citibank”. We have seen what has happened to Citibank. Who supported bank mergers at the time? The current Liberal finance critic. It was he who stood and spoke. He has since issued a mea culpa to the Canadian people for his support of bank mergers. The Conservative Party and its two predecessor parties opposed bank mergers at that time.

The World Economic Forum's 2009-10 global competitiveness report has again ranked Canada as having the world's soundest banking system. Canada's banks and other financial institutions are sound and well capitalized, and we are less highly leveraged than our international peers heading into this global financial crisis.

The Prime Minister's focus is economy, economy, economy. His economic action plan is working. The action plan helps families to invest in their future with the Conservative tax-free savings account. It lets people put their hard-earned tax dollars back into the value of their homes, while creating jobs for people who work as contractors, builders, landscapers, roofers. That is through the Conservative home renovation tax credit. I was saddened to see that the hon. member and his party voted against the Conservative home renovation tax credit. They would take that advantage away from our families and from our economy.

All the spending in the economic action plan is timely, targeted and temporary. That means it will lapse in two years and allow the budget to move back to a balanced position. While the Prime Minister has been hard at work on the economy, the Liberal Party tried to force a wasteful and opportunistic election just a few minutes ago in the House of Commons. The Liberal leader tried to force an election that would destabilize the economy. Yet when the chips were down, the same Liberal leader voted against the Conservative home renovation tax credit.

The Liberals also voted in favour of the deficit. They voted for all of the spending that our government has passed, and the Liberal leader has proposed billions in new spending, above and beyond what this government has done. For example, the Liberal leader has proposed changes to EI that would allow someone to work for only 45 days and then collect EI for the rest of the year. That is why it is being called the 45-day work year. We respectfully disagree with this proposal because it would cost billions of dollars to the treasury.

The Liberals have proposed other costly ideas on old age security and employment insurance that would drive up government

spending and the deficit. I invite my Liberal friend to work with us on the economic action plan. Let us work together to continue to create jobs, to help our economy in its recovery and to support Canadian families as we get through these difficult global economic times.

• (1850)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, it is almost entertaining to hear the parliamentary secretary say, “Please work with us”.

I would like to make a point of clarification. My colleague from Markham—Unionville was with the banks at the time he made those statements. The Liberals stood and voted against deregulation. The Reform Party, which constitutes a great deal of the current government, voted 100% in favour of deregulation, so we might have found ourselves in the same mess the United States is in had those members been in government at the time. That is the reality.

What has the finance minister done? The only thing he has done is he has approved 40-year mortgages with 0% down, just like the subprime mortgage problem that triggered the downfall in the United States and helped the world economy tumble. He has come back and since corrected that, putting it to 35 years, but—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The minute has expired, so I will go back to the parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, it is on a night like tonight after Liberal attempts to force a wasteful and opportunistic election that members like that could have a change of heart and agree that now is the time to work together with the Prime Minister to advance the economic action plan.

This action plan is creating jobs with construction projects that help our communities build and grow into the future. This economic action plan includes a Conservative home renovation tax credit that helps people put their tax dollars back into the value of their homes while creating jobs for renovators, contractors and landscapers and creating new demand for our troubled forestry sector and its products.

This is an economic action plan that is working and that is what we are doing on this side of the House. We are working for the economy's best interests to help our families. I would encourage the Liberals to shift gears and join us in doing that.

**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 6:54 p.m.)





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