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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 6, 2009

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 6, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*Translation*]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner concerning the implementation of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act for 2008.

[*English*]

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

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan is getting results. It is stimulating the economy. It is protecting and creating jobs. In just over 100 days, we are already seeing progress as our government continues to implement Canada's economic action plan.

Because of our swift actions, 90% of the plan is already being implemented. Funds are being committed to 7,500 projects, and 4,000 projects have already begun in the first six months of our 24-month plan.

Other measures of Canada's economic action plan that have already been implemented include reducing the tax burden on Canadian families and businesses through such measures as the home renovation tax credit and the first-time home buyers' tax credit; assisting the unemployed by extending EI benefits, making it easier to qualify for EI, and expanding EI training programs; investing in the economy of the future by upgrading infrastructure; expanding graduate student internships and investing in green technologies.

Our efforts are having a real and positive effect. We are seeing stabilization and the early beginnings of a recovery. This recovery is fragile. We are not out of the woods yet, which is why it is crucial

that we continue to implement our plan. Canada came into this recession on a strong footing with a strong, solid, long-term fiscal position. We paid down debt, allowing our government to introduce the largest stimulus package of all the G7 countries.

Our taxes are falling, making Canada a more attractive place to live, invest and do business. Thanks to our tax relief measures, tax freedom day now arrives 20 days earlier than it did when we took office. The world is noticing. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance, Canada's economy has been the envy of the world.

Euromoney magazine heralded the member for Whitby—Oshawa as their finance minister of the year, saying that we have been lucky to have him to enhance our “reputation for sound fiscal policy that takes full account of social justice” and keep “the financial sector out of the chaos”.

● (1005)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure what to make of all that. It was filled with the usual Conservative rhetoric that makes no sense to anyone outside the Conservative caucus.

The minister started by saying in just over 100 days we are seeing progress. What does that mean exactly? The budget was tabled 252 days ago. It is 208 days since the budget passed. So what does the minister mean when he says something like in just over 100 days we are seeing progress?

The truth is it does not mean anything at all, and neither did that speech. It may not have technically been a thinly veiled government ad for the Conservative Party, but it was a profound waste of the time of the House which the transport minister used to pat the finance minister on the back. If the finance minister wants a pat, here is a brief account of his record as finance minister.

The finance minister swung into his seat at the finance department and the very first thing he did was to raise income tax at the lowest bracket, ensuring he hurt vulnerable Canadians the most.

The finance minister broke his party's promise not to tax income trusts by increasing taxes on them a whopping 31% and destroying the life savings of hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

The finance minister tried to hobble the ability of Canadian companies to compete in the world with an insane interest deductibility policy that was so bad he had to withdraw it and two years later abandon it.

The finance minister has booked EI premium increases over the next five years that will pluck \$13 billion from the pockets of small businesses and workers.

The finance minister inherited a \$13 billion Liberal surplus in February 2006 and had made it into a deficit by 2008-09. He was still pretending to run a surplus 10 months ago. He acknowledged a \$30 billion deficit nine months ago, a \$50 billion deficit last spring, and a \$56 billion deficit last month.

I would like to congratulate the finance minister on his *Euromoney* award, but I would also urge him to stop taking up the House's time with self-promotional ministerial statements.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's third progress report is nothing but smoke and mirrors. The government is boasting that 90% of the funds promised have been committed, but it is impossible for us to find out exactly what is happening on the ground. The government's progress report provides no clarification about who might benefit from extended employment insurance benefits. They are just trying to avoid making it obvious that the measure was intended specifically for Ontario and western Canada. They do not care about Quebec workers.

The Canadian government could have followed the Obama administration's example; it has made detailed information available to all citizens about exactly what funds have been spent and which initiatives have been put forward as part of the American economic recovery plan. Instead of giving us a credible report, the Conservative government chose to produce this propagandist update trumpeting the government's achievements as the basis its \$30 million-plus ad campaign paid for out the public purse.

The report does clarify two things. First, it reminds us that the government's action plan was clearly devised to help Ontario and its auto sector, not to do anything about the forestry crisis that has been hurting Quebec for years. The recent announcement that Abitibi-Bowater's Beaupré mill was closing its doors for an indefinite period of time was a reminder that Quebec's forestry sector is going through a serious crisis. In its progress report, the Conservative government responded by giving the Ontario auto industry \$9.7 billion and the crisis-ridden forestry industry just \$57 million. Furthermore, it confirms the federal government's strategy of chipping away at the deficit at the expense of unemployed workers by once again pillaging the employment insurance fund and cutting off Quebec's lifeblood, just like their Liberal predecessors did.

The Bloc Québécois did give the government realistic, costed suggestions to promote recovery, deal with the deficit, and give the privileged few who benefit from the Liberal-Conservative system what they deserve. It is time for the government to shrug off its ideological straitjacket and start working on the solutions proposed by the Bloc Québécois to ensure that the Quebec nation can make a strong recovery from the economic crisis and that middle-class,

working Quebecers do not have to pay the price for the government's lack of vision when it comes to fighting the deficit.

● (1010)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two things are missing from the statement of the Minister of Finance, made by his amanuensis, the Minister of Transport. They are a recognition of the fact that the problems began in Canada before the current international crisis and, more importantly, a vision for the future. I will start with the first one.

When the Conservative government slashed corporate taxes, it had the support of the Liberals, who felt the government was not moving fast enough. The government reduced these taxes by \$60 billion. How did the Conservatives find the tax room to do that? The answer is simple. They took the \$57 billion in the employment insurance fund and put it in the general revenue fund.

Some people will say that this was government money anyway, but the problem is that the money in the employment insurance account was put there by employees first and foremost, and also by employers. Whether a forestry company turned a profit, broke even or lost money, it was obliged to pay EI premiums for every one of its employees.

Because this money was used to create tax room to give tax breaks to the wealthiest companies—a company did not pay tax if it had not made any money, so the only companies that got tax breaks were the wealthiest ones like the banks and the oil companies—forestry and manufacturing companies in Quebec wound up subsidizing big oil and the chartered banks, which had no need for such subsidies.

What is more, the government has absolutely no vision. The Conservatives talk about jobs, but what is their vision of the future of sustainable development and our responsibility for future generations? The oil sands are just one example of the Conservative government's failure to understand that every time they take action in Parliament, they must look at how it will affect future generations economically, socially and environmentally.

Instead of posing with future generations, for once the Conservatives should try taking action to help future generations by creating the jobs of tomorrow and having a vision for clean, renewable energies throughout this extraordinary country. Not only will they create wealth, but people will have sustainable jobs in an economy that respects the rights of future generations to have the same standard of living, the same quality of life and the same living environment as we do.

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-455, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (French language).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour for me to introduce a bill today that will ensure the application of the provisions of the Charter of the French Language in businesses under federal jurisdiction, whether they be chartered banks, interprovincial transportation companies or telecommunications companies. The Charter provisions give rights to workers, for example, to receive documents in their own language, and prevents an employer from requiring knowledge of a language other than French if it is not required to do the job.

There has been a controversy in recent years over whether or not to change the Official Languages Act. We are not changing the act. Instead of making ambulatory references to the Charter, we took all the provisions of the Charter of the French Language and incorporated them into the Canada Labour Code. We believe that this is a real, concrete recognition of the Quebec nation, without changing the Official Languages Act. Everyone wins here, because it does not take anything away from the English-speaking linguistic minority in Quebec.

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

* * *

• (1015)

PETITIONS

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table two petitions, one signed by the people of Sainte-Félicité, in the riding of Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, and one from the people of Saint-Léon-le-Grand, also in the riding of Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

These citizens want Canada Post to keep post offices open in all rural communities, including in their own communities.

[English]

POVERTY

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure this morning of presenting a petition on behalf of 53 signatories from across Canada from places like Ottawa; New Westminster and Surrey, British Columbia; Kitchener; Orillia; Toronto; Saskatoon; and other communities across Canada. The petitioners are very concerned about the plight of the poor in this country and those who are both out of work and continue to have work but who are working for minimum wage or at part-time jobs, and are not able to put enough money on the table to pay for their rent and cover food and clothing for themselves and their children.

They are also concerned about the inequality that is beginning to arise, particularly in terms of exclusion. The fact that so many people now cannot participate in their communities in the way that they used to because of this very debilitating reality in their life of poverty. I present this to the House for its consideration this morning.

Government Orders

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 Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 11 minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT (STIMULUS)

The House resumed from October 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, among other things, Bill C-51 implements the home renovation tax credit. This measure was inspired by the proposals made in both the Bloc Québécois recovery plans, presented last fall and the previous April. This bill also introduces a first time homebuyers' tax credit. This measure was also inspired by the Bloc's last platform. Bill C-51 will also implement Canada's international commitments to the International Monetary Fund, which were signed in 2008. It will also amend the Canada Pension Plan, from which Quebec is excluded. The amendments are based on an agreement with the provinces involved. Quebec is not involved, but if there is an agreement, we respect that.

Bill C-51 will implement the findings of a joint expert panel including representatives of Nova Scotia, the federal government and others to resolve a dispute. Once again, Quebec is not involved in that litigation, but if there is an agreement, I do not see why we would not support it.

For all of these reasons, and especially for the home renovation tax credit and the first time homebuyers' tax credit, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill.

Coming back to the home renovation tax credit, in April 2008, when the Bloc Québécois was presenting the initial phase of its economic recovery plan, we proposed introducing a home renovation tax credit with a very specific objective: to encourage people to convert their old oil furnaces to more energy efficient models. At that time, we argued that such a measure would help reduce our dependence on oil. This would have the added and equally important effect of rapidly injecting money into the economy.

Government Orders

This measure has been introduced by the Conservatives and we know that their primary focus was not necessarily on reducing greenhouse gases nor on energy efficient retrofits. Nonetheless, we maintain that this would be a way to stimulate the economy and we are in favour of this measure. We proposed it, we had a debate on it and we made our arguments. Today, our proposal is before us. It has been accepted by the government and we are indeed in favour of it; we would be hard pressed not to be. Even though it is not exactly what we had in mind, many people will benefit from the energy efficient retrofits. What is more, in the past few weeks, since the Bloc Québécois announced it was in favour of this measure, people have realized that we were the ones who proposed this measure and we are the ones who got it. Many people are congratulating us for convincing the government to introduce such a measure in its budget.

Even though this is not only or specifically about energy efficient retrofit measures, several areas are eligible for this tax credit, window products in particular. We know that one way to improve energy efficiency is to replace windows, doors and skylights. In a number of different ridings in Quebec, most MPs have heard many people and many window and door companies say that the tax credit associated with this measure has helped stimulate the home renovation sector.

● (1020)

Many people decided to do it because their heating oil costs were so high. As everyone knows, neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals have ever been particularly eager to clamp down on the oil companies, so big oil raises the prices whenever it feels like it. If people have a chance to reduce their oil heating costs by replacing their windows and get a tax credit to boot, they will do home renovations. That makes this measure a very attractive one.

We know that it will also reduce household energy consumption, which will directly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions make a significant contribution to undesirable climate change.

Buying better-quality windows and doors will make up for some of the negative effects of oil heating. When people use good products in renovations, they can reduce their heating oil consumption by between 7% and 12%. Renovations also minimize drafts, cut down on interior condensation and so on. They also reduce noise transference. We hear so much about air pollution, but there is also noise pollution. People living in urban centres and near highways experience significant stress due to noise and they will also benefit from this measure, which can cut down on noise pollution.

We also know that Quebec is a very large part of Canada and has an abundance of fresh water. When you have an abundance of a given resource, including water in the case of Quebec, you tend to take it for granted. In most homes in Quebec, you just have to open the tap and water flows freely in every room where it is needed, in the laundry room or in the washroom. Water is not free, especially hot water. Improving the insulation in a house with new doors and windows and other renovations can often cut the cost of heating water by 15%. These are significant measures and important to most Quebec households.

This tax credit also makes it possible to renovate the plumbing in a home. Shower heads can be changed to save water. It is a renewable resource but there are limits. We must conserve the hot water used for a normal family's household needs.

We are very supportive of such measures because they contribute globally to energy conservation and the reduction of pollution. It is a very interesting measure that has been put forward.

I would also like to talk about the first time homebuyers' tax credit. In its 2008 election platform, the Bloc Québécois proposed putting in place a homebuyers' program. Many Quebec families find it difficult to buy their first house. It is extremely important for the government to help families, including middle-income families, to purchase their first home. Buying a home is often the most important investment of one's life. Families often need a helping hand at the start.

● (1025)

Because there is a similar measure in this bill, we will support it once again.

We had some mixed feelings, because the Conservatives' measure is much less generous than what we proposed. But it is a step in the right direction, and it shows some understanding of the very solid arguments made by the various Bloc Québécois members. We think this is a step in the right direction, and that the government seems to have understood that it is necessary to support first time homebuyers.

This is a major investment for many families, and buying a home is an important step for many households in Quebec and Canada. They are able to build equity. As I said, this is the primary investment for many families, and it is very often the biggest investment a family will make in their lifetime. It is very necessary and important to support families in this step and to help them benefit from capital gains.

In recent years, the capital appreciation of real estate and the increase in home values has made home ownership appealing. Quebec is a little behind Canada in regards to home ownership and the desire of some families to purchase a home. So this is a very appealing measure for Quebec.

It is often very difficult for these families to build capital. The government is proposing an interest-free loan up to \$10,000. This makes it much more appealing for new and young families to purchase a first home.

This, in essence, is why the Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-51, and why we will vote in favour of it.

Government Orders

• (1030)

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess I was expecting comments but I think everybody was pleasantly surprised that my hon. colleague, who shares a seat at the finance committee, has decided to support Bill C-51. I would encourage, under his leadership, all members of the opposition to do as he has suggested because that was another wise decision from that member.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the House today in support of the economic recovery act, a key piece of legislation that would enact essential portions of Canada's economic action plan, along with other important initiatives.

The economic recovery act is part of our Conservative government's comprehensive response to the global economic crisis that has impacted nearly every country in the world since it began a little over a year ago, a downturn whose underlying triggers did not originate in Canada and, as such, cannot be solely resolved in Canada.

I underline for the opposition, seemingly determined to finger out government for the economic ills of the global marketplace, that this was and remains a global recession, one largely originating from the United States. This is not a made in Canada recession.

As a BBC report noted:

...the world economy crashed. The [American] sub-prime crisis lit a fuse that went from California or Southern Florida via New York to Iceland, Hungary and Japan.

The virus spread through the intricate arteries of the world's financial bloodstream.

While conceding this has been a global recession, we all recognize its epicentre is and continues to be our neighbour to the south, our largest trading partner, the United States.

Even as the green shoots of recovery begin their slow ascent in that country and around the world, the enormity of the great recession continues to ravage the American economy. Last week we learned that over a quarter million Americans lost their jobs in September. Unemployment is nearing double digits there. These are stunning numbers. They are sad reminders of the nearly 8 million men and women who have seen their jobs vanish since the start of this great American downturn.

As President Barack Obama noted, the U.S. September job report was:

...a "sobering reminder" that "progress comes in fits and starts and that we're going to need to grind out this recovery step by step.

He went on to say that it "will not happen overnight".

Budget implementation act 2 is an important part of this step for Canadians.

As I alluded to earlier, green shoots are appearing in the American economy. In the Canadian economy and those around the world, recovery is on the horizon.

This global recovery has largely been driven by the injection of fiscal stimulus by governments, stimulus unprecedented for both its sheer magnitude and for its coordinated global scale. However, this

is a recovery that remains as fragile, as it is tentative. Governments must stay the course. Their focus must not waver from the economy. As the G7 finance ministers and central bank governors noted in a communiqué following their meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, this weekend:

In recent months, we have started to see signs of a global economic recovery and continued improvement in financial market conditions. However, there is no room for complacency since the prospects for growth remain fragile and labor market conditions are not yet improving. We will keep in place our support measures until recovery is assured.

We cannot become complacent and we cannot allow a recovery to be jeopardized with some opportunistic political games here at home, political games like those that the Liberal leader has shamefully engaged in over the past few weeks. Maybe the Liberal leader has not noticed that rising unemployment continues to be a challenge around the world. Maybe he has not noticed that all governments around the world made the decision to run deficits to fight the recession and fight unemployment.

Our Conservative government, too, has made the decision to fight the recession and has done so through Canada's economic action plan. While this meant we made the difficult decision to run a multi-year deficit, it was the right decision, right for our economy and right for Canadians, for Canada's economic action plan is working.

• (1035)

Our economic action plan is helping to create and maintain jobs. It is extending benefits to the unemployed. It is helping those who need retraining and helping those individuals and industries undergoing a transformation, such as the auto and forestry sectors and so many others.

While our plan is achieving results, the job is not done. We need to stay on track. We need to provide the stability needed to secure recovery. Stability is not achieved by throwing Canada back into an unnecessary election but by following through on our plan and keeping our focus on the economy. That is exactly what we are doing with the ambitious economic recovery act.

Through the economic recovery act, we are cutting taxes for individuals and businesses by implementing the temporary home renovation tax credit and the first time homebuyers tax credit. We are fighting protectionism by relaxing tariffs on shipping containers. We are strengthening the Canada pension plan by allowing increased flexibility in how Canadians live, work and retire, as unanimously recommended by federal, provincial and territorial governments last May.

We are promoting global growth and cooperation by giving small and low income countries a bigger voice at the IMF, and strengthening our commitment to debt relief. We are ensuring dependability for public broadcasting by increasing the CBC's borrowing authority.

Government Orders

Additionally, to ensure that Canadian taxpayers can better keep track of the spending of their tax dollars, we are improving government transparency and accountability by requiring all federal departments and crown corporations to prepare and publish quarterly financial reports.

The economic recovery act also concludes the crown share saga for the people of Nova Scotia after decades of neglect from previous Liberal governments. As former Nova Scotia premier, John Buchanan, declared, "What happened then with the federal Liberal government under Jean Chrétien, they just refused to talk about the Crown share. They would not talk about it all".

In contrast, not only have we talked about the crown share with Nova Scotia, our Conservative government worked in conjunction with the province to resolve the issue.

Despite all this, the Liberal leader and his party vowed, essentially sight unseen, to oppose all these measures and vote against the economic recovery act. Why? To be blunt, to end Canada's economic recovery appears to be secondary to his obsession with forcing an election. The Liberal rallying cry is simply corrosive to Canada, "No matter what this Conservative government proposes, no matter who it benefits, it must be stopped, it must be defeated."

Canadians deserve better than that. Canadians deserve elected representatives willing to work together during this global recession, willing to do what is best for the Canadian economy not merely for the Liberal Party of Canada.

I would ask the Liberal leader to stop playing games, stop the obsession and scheming to force an unnecessary election. Sadly, I have no confidence he will listen for he has not even listened to his own Liberal caucus on that matter.

Liberals, like the member for York West who, in early September, pleaded with her leader to drop his maddening election obsession, telling the *Globe and Mail* that this was not the time for an election and that instead Parliament should "try to do the right thing for Canadians overall. We're in a difficult time. We want to focus on employment and getting people back to work and all of that".

The Liberal leader has ignored the Liberal member for York West and likely a great deal of his own Liberal caucus to continue with a single-minded obsession to force an election at all costs.

As the Liberal leader continues his quest to force an unnecessary election, he continues to attack our Conservative government's economic management and initiatives such as this economic recovery act. He also continues to gleefully denigrate and talk down our Canadian economy.

This is how he slammed Canada's economy in a speech this past September proudly posted on the Liberal website for the online world to see. He smeared Canada and said that Canada had "the worst performing economy in the G7". He then lectured by saying that "We've got to make Canada a world leader again, and we've got to do it now".

• (1040)

Not only are comments like those at the height of self-serving political arrogance, but they are factually wrong and do a disservice

to the tireless work and sacrifices of the men and women who have made Canada's economy what it is today.

That is something all Canadians should be proud of, and they should be cheered regardless of partisan affiliation.

I am going to take a moment now to speak not to the present but to the future, and to set the historical record straight, to speak to the readers of this edition of *Hansard*, the Canadian Parliament's most enduring tradition in a time far removed from today, be it 25, 50 or 100 years from now.

Even though we were in the midst of what has been labelled the great recession of this time, this was an especially proud moment to be a Canadian for one reason. Due to the inherent sense of humility in the Canadian character we downplayed that reason. Canada's economy and financial system during this challenging time was among the strongest and the most envied in the world. From Ireland, to France, to the United States, the Canadian model was the model that all others sought to replicate.

However, do not take my words as proof. Listen to what the world was saying about Canada, our country. Listen to how Ireland's largest daily newspaper, *The Irish Times*, praised our financial regulatory framework:

...Canada has attracted more attention recently as a paradigm for creating and regulating a banking system that has been stable, and even profitable, through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression...Canada's reputation for fiscal conservatism may have been boring during the boom times, but being boring has left the country's banking system in a rare position of strength in the financial world.

Listen to the French finance minister, Christine Lagarde, who after a meeting of the world's top finance ministers remarked:

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

Listen to what the Institute of International Finance and the world association of banks proclaimed about this country:

Canada is in a position today to punch above [its] weight. Why? Because [it has] come through this better than virtually any other financial system in a mature market, so [it] must be doing something right... [Canada] is viewed in many quarters as having incredible financial and of course political leadership, but also is somewhat of an honest broker.

World Bank president Robert Zoellick described our country this way:

Canada's experience offers lessons to others, especially its strong financial and regulatory environment that is helping it manage the shocks of the downturn.

He also went on to declare that by global standards, Canada's position was enviable:

I think a lot of people would like to change places with Canada.

The President of the United States, Barack Obama, said:

...in the midst of this enormous economic crisis, I think Canada has shown itself to be a pretty good manager of the financial system in the economy in ways that we haven't always been here in the United States. And I think that's important for us to take note of.

Or finally, the IMF, as reported in the *Globe and Mail* forecasted that:

Canada is on track to lead the world's wealthiest countries out of recession next year, a testament to sound economic policy...reinforc[ing that the] Prime Minister... and the Finance minister[s] policies have helped the Canadian economy weather the financial crisis better than most.

Government Orders

To the future I say with pride that this is how our country was viewed at this moment in time. I would also say that our Conservative government was not merely content to rest on its laurels. That is why we brought forward important legislation in the economic recovery act to help lay the ground work for a stronger economy as we fought off this great recession and built a more prosperous Canada for generations to come for all Canadians.

Speaking to the present, I ask for the support of the House, for members to do the right thing in the interests of what is their country. We share in it across the aisle, and Canadians at home trust us to act in their best interests.

• (1045)

Pass this budget implementation act to help keep Canada strong and keep this beautiful country the envy of the world well into the future.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to comments that were made outside the country, I will remind my good friend of the comments made by his leader with respect to Canada when he was outside the country. They were, indeed, shameful.

The parliamentary secretary said this is not a made in Canada recession. I want to ask him a question that many Canadians are asking me. A short three and a half years ago the reformed Conservative government inherited a \$13.2 billion surplus. It now has a \$56 billion deficit, for a total of close to \$70 billion. Canadians are asking where it blew \$70 billion and they are making the following comparison. The Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney increased the deficit in nine years by approximately \$21 billion. At this rate, the reformed Conservative government of today is blowing \$70 billion every three years. If it governs as the Mulroney government did, in nine years we will be in a deficit of over \$210 billion. Can he tell us where this money is going and how we are going to recover it?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate his enthusiasm and I hope no Canadians were listening to his math. I guess that is Liberal math.

Since this Conservative government has been fortunate enough to lead this country, we have paid down \$37 billion in debt. That is one of the main reasons we are able to withstand a short-term deficit that we are now running.

As to the incredible statement that the hon. member made about blowing money, he should tell that to an unemployed individual who is now receiving employment insurance. He should tell that to an unemployed individual who is now receiving retraining. He should tell that to an unemployed individual who has an extra five weeks of employment insurance. If that is his view of blowing money, I think Canadians are going to take exception to that sort of comment.

The Liberals talk about their surplus. In fact, they have talked about the surplus that was legislated. Members have heard me make this comment in the House before. It was never legislated. Under a Liberal government there were budget bills passed that had a surplus in them, but there was never a legislated contingency fund, which is the term they use. It was never there.

This government has the interests of Canadians at heart. To suggest that we are blowing money on encouraging Canadians to be able survive in this downturn is unbelievable.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say at the outset that while we in the NDP support Bill C-51, I have a question for the parliamentary secretary regarding the CPP amendments.

One of the benefits is a reduced incentive to retire early and an increased incentive to stay in the workforce longer. I would like to know from the parliamentary secretary what the government's models show as to the projected number of people who will be affected by this. In other words, how many people will take a pass on early retirement and elect to stay in the workforce longer, based on the formula it proposed, and what sort of basis did it present for these numbers?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I would use the terms the hon. member used in referring to the changes in the Canada pension plan.

We need to remember that the Canada pension plan has a triennial review and it is under the joint administration, so to speak, of the provinces, the territories and the federal government. It was reviewed and that review was reported back to the finance ministers in May, with the recommendation that it was actuarially sound. However, there were some minor changes suggested to do with, as the hon. member said, early access to the Canada pension plan for those 60 years of age and older.

It was felt by all ministers across this country that it was not exactly fair, that some improvements needed to be made. They are minor changes. They will impact very few and will impact only those who will be coming into that system in the future.

• (1050)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance for his speech today and his leadership on the finance committee. I appreciate his advice. I am a member of the finance committee and his leadership has made a big difference in that the committee actually works well.

My question is simple. The Liberal Party supported the economic action plan in the spring. Part of that plan is the home renovation credit which is part of what is being implemented in Bill C-51. Is it not hypocritical of the Liberal Party not to be supporting this bill at this time?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to that simple question is yes.

While I have the opportunity, I want to recognize the hon. member for Burlington for his great work. He is always willing to step up and fill in when some of us are called away. He has done a great job. It is Conservatives like him who make this government strong and proud.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the speech by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance and I heard him mention their successes. I hope he will also acknowledge their failures.

Government Orders

The situation in the forestry sector is a Conservative government failure. The forestry sector has been in crisis for five years now, and for four of those years the Conservative Party has been in power. Again, the Conservatives have provided assistance to the automobile sector, it is true, but they did nothing for the forestry sector.

I hope my colleague will be honest enough to acknowledge in this House their failure when it comes to the forestry sector.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I will do no such thing because there has been no failure of any industry through support of this government.

We have recognized that in this economic downturn and even before we were facing this economic crisis around the world, that the forestry sector was facing some huge impacts of its own.

It was two years ago, I believe, that the community development trust fund was put in place to help communities transition into an economy where the forestry sector was facing some struggles. We brought in a softwood lumber agreement with the United States that brought \$5 billion back to the forestry industry in Canada.

We are there for the forestry industry just as we are there for any industry in this country.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very convenient for the member to say that it is very important to stay the course and for Canadians to keep the government in place because it has not yet gotten the job done. That is like asking for an indefinite extension with no end to it.

I have two questions for the hon. member.

The government keeps harping that 90% of the infrastructure projects have started and are under way. If it is true that 90% are already on track, how would an election stop things that are essentially, according to the government's own words, on automatic pilot?

The hon. member talked about a recession that is not made in Canada. I will remind the hon. member that we are a trading nation. We are very much dependent on world economic trends. Could the hon. member tell us the last time there was a recession in Canada that was not simultaneously going on in the United States or somewhere else in the world?

Would the parliamentary secretary stop with his truisms? Of course it is not a made in Canada recession. We are always affected by what goes on south of the border or elsewhere in the world because we sell natural resources to other economies that use those as inputs in their economies.

Could he tell us when the last made in Canada recession was?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I referred in my speech to *Hansard*, which keeps track of all the speeches, all the words that are uttered in this House. Mr. Speaker, if you would ask some of your support staff to check *Hansard*, they would find many occasions where Liberals stood in this House and talked about a Conservative recession.

It is the member's colleagues who try to talk down the Canadian economy, who try to suggest that it is any one government in this one country that has caused this recession.

For him to stand and ask that question now, I would suggest that at his caucus meeting on Wednesday, he ask that question of his colleagues who have suggested that it was a made in Canada recession, because that has only come from that side of the House.

• (1055)

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in opposition to Bill C-51 and I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

I oppose this bill for one simple reason. Along with my Liberal colleagues, I have lost confidence in the Conservatives' ability to govern this country and guide it through difficult economic times back to a robust, strong economy. Through its budgetary actions over the last year, the Conservative government has failed Canadians by its incompetence and divisive tactics. We can no longer support a government whose failed policies have hurt Canadian families and their interests.

Over the last 10 months, the Liberal Party has tried to make Parliament work and focused on helping Canada through this recession. We tried to work with the government. We insisted on a stimulus package and fought for effective changes to employment insurance that would help Canadian families. However, we have lost confidence and trust in the government.

Let me count the ways. There is a record deficit that was revised from a surplus, from \$34 billion to \$50 billion to \$56 billion in less than a year. The government has failed to plan for the H1N1 flu by delaying the ordering of flu vaccines and sending body bags to communities rather than assistance.

There are 450,000 more unemployed Canadians today than there were a year ago. The Conservatives' fiscal update recently said that another 200,000 plus Canadians will join the ranks of the unemployed in the coming year. The government has done everything to turn the hands of time back on women's equality, especially regarding pay equity.

Harper's broken promises not to raise taxes are an issue. Those are some of the—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe I heard the name of the Prime Minister. We only use titles or riding names.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

Bill C-51 deals with the Nova Scotia offshore petroleum resources. It would bring certain payments for Nova Scotia's offshore petroleum resources outside the framework of budget bills. This means that in addition to the one time payment the province receives of \$174 million, in future years the payment would be automatically sent to the province rather than needing to be passed annually in a budget bill.

Regardless of the details of this change to revenue sharing, the Conservative government does not have the kind of track record on federal-provincial relations that breeds confidence in its ability to treat provinces fairly.

Government Orders

The Conservative government has demonstrated time and again that its promises to Canadians, whether promises not to raise taxes, promises not to tax income trusts, or promises to protect Canada's fisheries, are meaningless.

No province is more aware of the Prime Minister's willingness to break promises than Newfoundland and Labrador. Time and time again the government says one thing and does another. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians well know this with the promises on the equalization formula and Goose Bay. Promises made, promises broken.

Another challenge is the Canadian fishery. The government never meant a word of its promise to reform NAFO to better protect our fish stocks.

The amendments to the NAFO convention failed to adequately protect fish stocks off the east coast of Canada and would create substantial new problems which could eventually compromise Canadian sovereignty and allow foreign patrol boats to establish and enforce catch and quota regulations within Canada's 200 mile zone.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians know too well the divisive politics of the Conservatives as we were hit earlier this year with a broken promise regarding the \$1.4 billion that was taken away from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador with changes to the equalization formula.

During the government's first two years in office, the Prime Minister did not once convene a meeting of first ministers, preferring instead to leave provincial and territorial leaders outside of the federal government's plans to lead the federation. When he finally did meet with them, he promised to send them a letter of suggestions on how they could stimulate their economies.

This politics of division and heavy-handed federalism is unfair and has been the hallmark of the Conservative government. Canadians are tired of politics of division and isolation. Canada works best when federal and provincial governments work in partnership, in the best interests of all Canadians. That is how the Liberals have governed in the past, by striking agreements with the provinces and territories on things like the universal child care agreement, creating plans to address health care issues, and the Kelowna accord.

On the home renovation tax credit, the Liberal Party has expressed its full support for this tax credit. This credit is part of the budget plan already implemented by Parliament. The Canada Revenue Agency is already working toward the home renovation tax credit.

It would be far more prudent for the government to have included the home renovation tax credit in previously introduced budget implementation legislation along with the rest of its flagship programs. It is disingenuous for the government to tell Canadians that this tax credit is at risk while at the same time running hundreds of ads promoting the use of the program.

In my view, this is the kind of political trickery that the government plays so often to manipulate voters. That the credit is at risk is simply untrue. The Liberal Party is fully in support of the

home renovation tax credit and Canadians will not be fooled by attempts to divide them to think otherwise.

With respect to the CBC, this legislation would adjust the borrowing authority that applies to the CBC substantially, permitting the national broadcaster to borrow up to \$220 million in order to cash manage through the coming year as it develops a new strategy. Current legislation restricts the amounts that the CBC can borrow, allowing the broadcaster to access loans only up to \$25 million.

It was the current government that only a few months ago refused to step in and meet the broadcaster's request for bridge financing to deal with the shortfall in revenues during an economic downturn.

Not only did the Conservative government refuse to provide the CBC with the bridge financing it required to maintain 2008 staffing and service levels across the country this spring but it went so far as to vote against a motion put forward by the Liberal Party recognizing the indispensable cultural role of the CBC in providing national, regional and local programming in Canada.

● (1100)

This challenge to the CBC came at a time when its success and audience share of the market was growing. Every week almost 80% of English Canada uses the CBC. This success comes despite the fact that the CBC is the worst financed public broadcaster in the industrialized world.

The government long argued that funding the CBC was a waste of taxpayers' dollars and used the pretext of tough economic times to launch an assault on this national institution by withholding the bridge financing the CBC needed to ride out the economic storm without job and programming cuts.

In fact, the government went so far as to withhold approval of the annual top-up funding for the broadcaster forcing the CBC to make dramatic job and programming cuts to meet its government forced budget cuts of \$63 million.

Had it acted in the spring and made additional financing available to the CBC, the government could have saved jobs and crucial cultural and regional programming that has now been lost. Instead, the government's inaction has forced the CBC to come up with an alternative plan to weather the economic storm.

As a crown corporation, the CBC cannot access loans from the private sector. Because of this and because of the refusal of the government to provide the network with \$125 million in a bridge financing request, the CBC had to look elsewhere to find the financial security and flexibility it needs at this time.

Through the bill, the government is allowing one of our most valued cultural institutions to mortgage future stability by selling off assets, monetizing future lease revenues so that the CBC can access the cash it needs during this economic downturn.

The sale of assets means that the CBC will be forgoing future revenues to deal with the short-term economic pain caused by the government's unwillingness to step in and mitigate the fallout of the economic downturn. There is little doubt that members of the government do not value the CBC.

Government Orders

One final point is with regard to the Canada pension plan. The bill makes an accounting change that will reduce the amount older workers are penalized by choosing to work after the age of 65. These changes will be made on a go forward basis and seniors currently collecting their pensions will see no real change in their benefit amounts as a result of these accounting differences.

While ensuring pension policies are actuarially neutral is a responsible step for any government to take, it would be wise for the government to face up to the fiscal realities our seniors are facing in so many parts of our country and look toward providing meaningful support to seniors.

With one in three Canadians retiring with no retirement income savings beyond the core mandatory government programs of CPP, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, governments need to consider making more than cosmetic and accounting changes to ensure Canadian seniors can access benefits they need as they age.

We can do better. We must do better for Canadian seniors and for all Canadians.

• (1105)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech. I am a little shocked to begin with. I am glad that she did finally get back on topic.

We are actually debating the budget implementation act, not whether or not the House has lost confidence in this government because obviously it did not. We survived a confidence vote last Thursday.

I think it is time that all hon. members of the House move on beyond that. I am sure they have not, but I think we should all move on beyond that and actually deal with what is more important to Canadians, and that is ensuring that we survive and recover well from this economic recession.

I then listened with shock to the hon. member's comments about the CBC, suggesting that we had cut funding to the CBC. This is a business plan that the CBC has asked for. We have put that in place.

Before we actually managed to elect a Conservative government, why did the Liberals cut the CBC's budget in three consecutive budgets?

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Mr. Speaker, I thought it was most important to give the reasons why I was not supporting Bill C-51 which included the fact that I have no faith in the government's ability to move us through these difficult economic times.

Regarding the CBC, it was the government's inaction that forced the CBC to make cuts to its programming and to ask for these changes so that it could borrow money. It is as a result of the government's inaction that has caused the CBC to make these moves. That is the reason why this has been so challenging to the CBC. That is one of the reasons why I will not be supporting Bill C-51.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-51 implements the first-time home buyers' tax credit, and that is an ongoing government program.

However, the home renovation tax credit, which is much vaunted and touted by the government and much advertised, is only planned to be a one year effort. How many people were projected to take advantage of this program? Why is it not an ongoing program if it is so popular? Given the big advertising budget the government has allocated to this program, I am just wondering whether it will spend more on advertising than on tax credits.

On that basis, I would like to encourage the government to make an announcement very shortly that it will extend this program on an ongoing basis.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the opportunity to comment on the amount of spending the government has made on advertising the program. As my hon. colleague commented, perhaps the government is spending more on advertising the program and speaking of the benefits of the program than it is on the tax credit itself.

Canadians should be encouraged to continue to make investments in home renovations, to continue to stimulate and put more money into the economy, especially during these difficult economic times.

There are a lot of people in the construction industry who are unemployed. We would like to see more work for those people. If we look at the infrastructure program, for example, only 12% of that money is actually encouraging work right now. There are a lot of construction workers available for home renovations.

• (1110)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague who is a fabulous member of Parliament with a strong background.

She is familiar with biotech. Folks who were in to see me last week said that the government is turning a blind eye to what should be done to encourage that industry.

Employment insurance, which is not in the bill, needs some more robust work. The hon. member has people in her area who do not qualify but who should qualify. I wonder if she could comment on that.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Mr. Speaker, first, on the employment insurance issue, recently a person came into my office and told me that he had worked 17 years in the mining industry. He had uninterrupted service in the mining industry, but unfortunately in November last year he lost his job and does not qualify for these EI changes. The EI changes are simply not enough.

Regarding biotech, the government has turned its back on the biotechnology industry by not giving it some assistance during these difficult economic times with regard to ensuring that it has access to funding.

If Canada wants to move forward in the knowledge-based economy, if we are sincere in saying we want to be an innovative country, then much money needs to be put into the knowledge-based sector to ensure that we lead in this area rather than weakly follow others.

Government Orders

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-51, an act to implement certain provisions of budget 2009. The Liberal Party opposes the bill as a matter of confidence. This is not a decision we have taken lightly, and it has come after making a legitimate and honest effort to work with the Conservatives to do what is in the best interests of Canadians. Yet, time and time again the government has demonstrated that it is not interested in cooperation and it is not interested in compromise.

After the last election, the Prime Minister found that once again Canadians would not trust him with a majority government. He initially accepted their judgment, but after Parliament was recalled and the Speech from the Throne was delivered, he made it clear that he was in no mood for cooperation. The economic update that was delivered surprised everyone by its partisan tone, and it did nothing to help deal with the economic crisis. In fact, what the *Globe and Mail* wrote on November 28 sums up the Conservatives, in terms of their strategy, during the first economic update:

For an economist, [the Prime Minister] can certainly see a political opportunity faster than an economic mess. In the fiscal update yesterday, the government should have concerned itself with rallying the people - and the Parliament - of Canada behind a vigorous response to the global economic crisis. Instead, the proposals put forward by...the Minister of Finance, amounted to fiscal gerrymandering.

After the election, [the Prime Minister] promised a new co-operative, less partisan approach to governing. He pledged to work with the opposition to deal with the economic crisis.

The most significant item in yesterday's update, however, was a manoeuvre that had nothing to do with the economy, and could needlessly plunge the government into chaos....

By destabilizing their own government, the Conservatives have placed Canada at a competitive disadvantage against other states.

Through gratuitous partisanship, they have turned an economic crisis into a political one.

They should withdraw their cynical attempt to rewrite election rules and concentrate on what matters—

The Deputy Speaker: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I do apologize for interrupting the hon. member's speech. I am sure he is going to get to the point of debate at some point, but I have been listening for about two minutes and he has not even addressed what we are debating. It is not about confidence. It is not about *Globe and Mail* articles. It is about passing a piece of legislation that we have promised to pass. If the Liberals want to stand in the way of that, that is fine, but let us talk about the subject we are discussing today, the budget implementation act two.

The Deputy Speaker: The member is making a point of relevance. I know the member for Mississauga—Brampton South would want to speak to the bill. It is traditional for budgetary bills to have a wide swath of what is in them and why members might support or not support it, but I do hope the member will be mindful of the rules of relevance.

• (1115)

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I understand the frustration and concern. As we all know, the opposition called their bluff and the Conservatives were forced to come up with a real plan to deal with the recession. That plan, which the government promotes as Canada's economic action plan, would never have existed if the

Prime Minister had a majority government. It is important that we remember that.

After forcing these major concessions from the Conservatives, the Liberal Party then agreed that we would act in good faith and support the budget only after amending the motion to provide for regular reports to Canadians on the progress of its implementation. We put them on probation because we wanted to give Canadians the accountability that they deserve and to make sure that the government would actually follow through on its commitments.

It is almost Thanksgiving. The construction season has wound down and there are still virtually no infrastructure projects under way. An entire construction season was wasted at a time when we were supposed to be stimulating the economy. It is hard to create jobs and get the economy moving when only 12% of the announced projects were under way before September. In fact, it is not just infrastructure. Spending is not getting out the door at all. The entire so-called action plan is simply a listing of one failure after another.

For example, take the \$12 billion secured credit facility that the Prime Minister promised for the auto sector. None of the money has gone out. Out of the \$1 billion green infrastructure fund, only \$71 million, or less than 1%, has been allocated. Of the \$2 billion municipal infrastructure lending program, only \$80.6 million, or less than one-half of one per cent, has been allocated. Of the \$400 million set aside for housing for low-income seniors, only two projects totalling \$5.35 million have been announced. The government's own report states that only \$350 million of the \$1 billion community adjustment fund has been "committed". I could go on and on. The list gets greater and greater.

One can see that the Conservatives are unable to get the stimulus money out the door. They are spending tens of millions of dollars running campaign-style ads on taxpayer dimes.

I do not know how they can justify spending \$40 million to tell us about an action plan that is not actually working and which they cannot implement. Let me put this in perspective. They only spent \$6.5 million to warn Canadians about the very real danger of the H1N1 virus. To add to the confusion, the Prime Minister spent the summer making announcements, but 14 of those 16 announcements were for regular, non-stimulus infrastructure projects that either will not begin for years or had been planned for years before and were long delayed by the Conservative government.

Government Orders

It gets worse. Not getting money out and wasting taxpayer dollars on meaningless advertising is just the beginning. The money that the government has spent is being directed in a very partisan manner. In Ontario, the Conservatives promised 15% more dollars on average to their own ridings. That amounts to \$13.1 million from the infrastructure stimulus fund and the recreation facilities fund combined, compared to the \$11.1 million average for Liberal-held ridings.

In the stimulus program for rehabilitation of the community recreation centres, 18 out of the top 20 ridings by number of projects granted in Ontario are held by the Conservatives. Of course, the government tries to claim that this is all a coincidence and that things just happened to work out this way. However, it is very difficult to keep a secret of this nature.

I assume the member opposite would love to hear this quotation from the *National Post*, which summed it up by saying:

—the nominated Conservative candidate in the Ontario riding of Markham-Unionville...said on live television that the reason his riding has not received federal funding for a medical testing centre is that the Member of Parliament is a Liberal.

That is not getting the job done for all Canadians. That is buying votes. Canadians expect their government to make informed and prudent decisions and not turn their trust into a Conservative rewards program. Beware of Conservatives bearing gifts because with one hand they giveth and with the other hand they taketh away.

The same Prime Minister who said that he would never raise taxes is quietly implementing a \$13 billion payroll tax that kills jobs and acts as a disincentive to employers. Perhaps I am giving him too much credit by taking him at his word. He is the same Prime Minister who pledged that he would never tax income trusts and then did so anyway, hurting seniors and many others who invested their life savings simply because they believed the Prime Minister when he said, "There is no greater fraud than a promise not kept".

● (1120)

I was elected by the constituents of Mississauga—Brampton South to fight for their interests in Ottawa. What I have seen is systematic deception and incompetence on the part of the government. Too many of my constituents are losing their jobs. Despite being a prosperous part of the greater Toronto area, the unemployment rate in my riding hovers around 11%, compared with a rate of around 6.5% when the Conservatives came into power.

There are 450,000 more unemployed Canadians today than there were a year ago and according to the Conservatives' own report card, another 200,000 Canadians will join them in the coming year.

That is why the Liberals oppose Bill C-51. That is why the Conservatives have lost our confidence. We can do better. Canada can do better. We look forward to ensuring they are held to account.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was great, unfortunately, it was on the wrong bill. I thought he was supposed to be talking about Bill C-51. In that vein, I would like to ask him a question about something that does apply to the bill, which is the home renovation tax credit.

I understand his party supports the home renovation tax credit and has said that if the Liberals become the government, they would

certainly honour the program. However, has he not noticed that the Conservatives have only made this a temporary program? The first-time homebuyers' tax credit was brought in as a continuous program, but the renovation tax credit is only a one-year event. In fact, they have spent as much money advertising the program as they are probably going to give out in tax credits.

Does he think the government should make a commitment to extend this program beyond one year?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I remind my hon. colleague that the premise of opposing the bill is predicated on the fact that we have lost confidence in the government, and it was very important for me to articulate why we had lost confidence. We put the context in place by saying that the current government had clearly demonstrated that its so-called economic action plan was not being properly implemented.

With regard to the home tax credit, we do support it. We understand it is an important initiative. However, the bigger issue here, the point of debate for us and the reason why we oppose the government is we have lost confidence in it. That was clearly demonstrated in my remarks when I talked about the fact that infrastructure money was not getting out and the money that was getting out was being used in a very partisan way. The government is using taxpayer money to advertise its very ineffective action plan. Canadians have a right to know and deserve to understand what is going on, and that is why we are opposing the bill.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I congratulate the hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South on his role as small business and tourism critic for our caucus. My question for him is with reference to his critic portfolio.

When it comes to tourism in particular, how are the government's policies negatively affecting the small businesses and the tourism industry?

The member mentioned a couple of promises that the Prime Minister did not keep. One was he called for fixed election dates, yet he called the last two elections. How does the member feel about the Prime Minister calling elections in the midst of the economic crisis?

The Deputy Speaker: The parliamentary secretary did raise a point of order about relevance, asking members to stick to the topic of the bill before the House. The member for Mississauga—Brampton South is rising to answer the question, but we should be mindful of the rule on relevance.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I will very quickly answer the questions of my colleague.

Many Canadians have lost faith and trust in the Prime Minister when he breaks his promise on fixed election dates.

Government Orders

With regard to tourism, which is a very important part of our economic recovery, imposing these restrictions on, for example, a NAFTA partner like Mexico does not help promote business. Nor does it help promote two-way trade. That has hurt our tourism industry and it has caused a great deal of job losses in the industry as well.

However, more important, the Prime Minister talked about the fact that he would not raise taxes. At the same time, the Minister of Finance announced a \$13 billion EI premium increase, a payroll tax hike, which effectively would harm small and medium-sized businesses. These businesses are the engine of our economy and they help generate the economic wealth and the jobs created in our country.

• (1125)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question will be very short, once I get over the fact that the hon. member just said he would oppose this budget implementation bill. One of the most important pieces of the bill is the home renovation tax credit, which he said he supported.

Would he square that circle?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are playing partisan games. They are trying to mislead Canadians. Clearly the budget implementation bill is not a reflection of one or two initiatives, which obviously members of the House support. It is a reflection of a loss of confidence.

What the member fails to realize is the fact that this inaction plan, as I refer to it, has not delivered. Only 12% of the funds have gone out and it has gone to Conservative ridings. It has compounded the situation by further losing out on the construction season, with jobs not being created.

That is why we oppose it.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to discuss Canada's economic recovery act. This vital legislation will implement key measures from the economic action plan, our targeted road map to save and protect jobs today, while preparing us for the economy of tomorrow, along with other important economic initiatives.

Since January, we have been putting our plan in place as quickly and effectively as possible. We have done so because our Conservative government understands that Canadians are concerned about their jobs and their future, the very same Canadians I represent in communities all across my beautiful riding of Huron—Bruce.

I want to assure those Canadians that this plan is working. Along with their help, our plan is boosting Canada's recovery by focusing on the economy and promoting economic stability. In so doing, we are helping Canada emerge from the current global recession as a more competitive economy.

Do not take my word for it. Look at the recent IMF world economic outlook, a report card on the global economy. It forecasted Canada to have the highest growth of any G7 country in 2010. The World Economic Forum's 2009-10 Global Competitiveness Report ranked Canada as the 9th most competitive economy in the world, a big jump from 14th under the previous Liberal government in 2005-06.

Under the 2009 *Forbes* magazine's best countries for business ranking, which looks at business conditions in over 100 economies around the world, Canada has rocketed up four spots to number three.

Listen to how respected BBC economics editor Stephanie Flanders raved about Canada. She stated, "Nowhere is immune, but by most key measures, the Canadians are coming out of this crisis in a league of their own".

Indeed, Canada entered the current global recession on a strong economic fiscal footing. Our Conservative government paid off \$37 billion of debt, giving Canada one of the lowest debt to GDP ratios in the G7, while simultaneously cutting taxes and making key strategic investments.

As BMO economist Doug Porter remarked in an interview with *CBC Newsworld* earlier this year, "Canada did go into this downturn with almost pristine fundamentals. Those pristine fundamentals do suggest that Canada will hold up a little better than other economies and probably will emerge a little stronger than other economies". We are seeing that evidence today.

Our Conservative government is not, however, merely content to ride on our past achievements. We are building on our strengths to ensure Canada's economy remains in poll position for the recovery throughout Canada's economic action plan.

Canada's economic action plan is targeted, effective and timely. It is a plan that is supporting struggling communities and industries, cutting taxes, building new roads and bridges, helping the unemployed and much more. In total, the plan is providing \$61 billion of stimulus to create 220,000 Canadian jobs. On top of these measures, over 160,000 Canadians are benefiting from work-sharing agreements that are allowing companies to continue to provide jobs to their employees.

Canada's economic recovery act is an extension of that plan. Not only will it implement numerous key measures from the plan outlined in budget 2009, but other new initiatives to support ongoing economic stability and growth. I understand the Liberal leader, before even reading the act, decided to oppose and vote against it, as he continues his singular obsession with an election, no matter the cost.

I am proud to say that while the Liberal Party of Canada pushes for an unnecessary election that could threaten Canada's fragile economic recovery, our Conservative government is pushing forward for Canadians in support of economic recovery.

While Liberals seemingly did not bother reading the economic recovery act before rushing out to denounce it, let me highlight the key measures they have decided to blindly oppose.

Government Orders

•(1130)

Through the economic recovery act, we are creating new opportunities for our construction and resource sectors with new tax credits.

To help alleviate some of the fees associated with buying a house, fees that often serve as a disincentive for young people entering the housing market, and to encourage first time home ownership, we have introduced the first-time home buyers' tax credit. This would provide up to \$750 in tax relief to help with the purchase costs of a first time homeowner.

If I may add from personal experience, I bought a home a few years ago for the first time. This tax measure would have been a very appreciative measure. I can appreciate that families are looking forward to this new tax credit.

The first-time home buyers' tax credit has worked, as illustrated by the strong existing home sales in Canada largely driven by the entry of first-time home buyers. An entry spurred on by first-time home buyers' tax credit and another key element of Canada's economic action plan, the increase to \$25,000 to the amount first time home buyers can draw from their RRSPs. Members do not need to believe me, but this was stated in a *Canadian Press* article from September:

...thanks in part to government incentive programs, particularly for new home buyers, the market has bounced back.

Earlier this year, Ottawa increased the amount first-time home buyers can withdraw from their RRSPs from \$20,000 to \$25,000, and implemented a tax credit for first-timers....

Again, this is a program I was fortunate enough to take advantage of several years ago. It was a tremendous opportunity to put toward the purchase of my home and I am very proud to see our government's action enhance this so that other young couples who are looking at purchasing a home can use this system.

While it is important that young families can enter the housing market, it is also important that they and all Canadians can add value to their homes. Another housing measure in the economic recovery act would help do just that, the home renovation tax credit, or HRTC. It is estimated that the credit would provide approximately 4.6 million families with up to \$1,350 in tax relief on eligible renovation projects undertaken before February 2010. Without a doubt, the HRTC has been an overwhelming success.

The *Globe and Mail* hailed it in a glowing editorial declaring that the HRTC:

...has proven one of the more successful of the government's stimulus measures, helping create demand for services and supplies.

While I travel throughout the riding of Huron—Bruce and talk to home builders, home building supply firms, the home building supply companies are very busy. The people who work in the inventory section are swamped and very busy. One would never know there is a global recession going on. Contractors are booked. These are the initiatives that we took to ensure our economy is moved forward. This is definitely one of the great measures brought forward.

The HRTC is putting tradespeople to work and giving a boost to those who produce and sell building materials. A report from the *Globe and Mail* states:

"Home Hardware Stores Ltd., Canada's largest independent seller of building materials, is getting a boost from the government's renovation tax credit", spokesman Rob Wallace said....

The company's eastern, central and western warehouses all are reporting higher shipments to more than 1,000 independently owned stores...

"We're ecstatic," said Mr. Wallace. "We're far ahead of where we expected to be."

Those are results for Canadians. A report from the *Sault Star* in northern Ontario stated that by most accounts, the HRTC move has worked. It went on to state:

"There's no doubt that it has brought a lot of people out of the woodwork to do renovations that they normally wouldn't have done," said Andrew Walton, sales manager at Northwood Window & Door Centre.

John Patrizio, general manager at Rona Cashway Building Centre said that the building store has been busy with customers planning to take advantage of the 15% tax credit that covers projects that were started after January 27 or will be started before February 1, 2010.

•(1135)

Bob Boissonneault, assistant store manager at Home Depot, said that the tax credit has generated more spending. "A tonne of people have taken advantage of it".

Clearly, the temporary nature of the credit is providing an incentive for homeowners across Canada to continue to invest in their biggest and best asset during these challenging economic times. One wonders why the Liberals have opposed this measure and this act, and one wonders why they took this position even before taking the time to review the act.

Another key measure that the Liberals are opposing in the economic recovery act is enhanced support targeted for those who need it most. For low income Canadians who receive social assistance, landing a job can cost them dearly in both higher taxes and reduced income support. The working income tax benefit, or, as it is known, WITB, helps to reduce the financial disincentives faced by these individuals.

Originally introduced in budget 2007 by our government, the landmark WITB is a refundable tax credit that helps make work pay by supplementing the earnings of low income workers to help ensure that these workers are financially better off by getting a job. For low income working Canadians with disabilities, facing even larger barriers to workforce participation, the WITB includes a generous disability supplement.

The Caledon Institute of Social Policy has called the WITB "a welcome addition to Canadian social policy"...it "fills a long-recognized gap in Canada's income security system". Roger Martin of the Rotman School of Management said that it was "very helpful to the working poor in our urban centres".

The economic recovery act would enhance the WITB by \$580 million in 2009 and subsequent taxation years. It is expected that more than 1.5 million Canadians would benefit from the enhanced WITB for the 2009 tax year. As a member of the human resources committee, we have heard nothing but favourable comments about the WITB initiative.

Government Orders

That is not all the economic recovery act is about. It also would provide Canadians with more flexibility to improve their quality of life, even during difficult times. Our Conservative government understands Canadians, particularly those nearing retirement who are worried about their pensions. Uncertainty and turmoil in financial markets is a concern for all Canadians, especially older Canadians who have worked hard and saved diligently for their retirement years and rely on their pensions and savings.

The economic recovery act would not only help maintain the quality of life for seniors, it would actually improve it during these difficult economic times. For example, the act would strengthen the Canada pension plan by implementing a number of reforms, reforms that were unanimously supported and recommended by the federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers in their tri-annual review of the CPP last May.

The reforms include the following: removing the work cessation test in 2012 so that people may take their retirement pension as early as age 60 without the requirement of a work interruption or earnings reduction; enhancing the retirement pension calculation to allow up to an additional year of low earnings to be dropped from the calculation; and enabling a person under the age of 65 who receives a retirement pension and continues working or returns to work to contribute to the Canada pension plan and thereby create eligibility for a new post-retirement benefit.

The Canada pension plan reforms would ensure that older Canadians across the country have the support they need to adapt to a changing economy. Furthermore, our Conservative government is also continuing to move forward on pension issues. Earlier this year, we held national consultations on improvements to federally regulated pensions to inform of key changes to be released shortly.

● (1140)

Moreover, as only approximately 10% of pensions are federally regulated, we are also working with provincial governments, forming a research work group and arranging a national summit of finance ministers later this year to further look at the larger issue of retirement income security in Canada.

I would also like to take a moment to quickly review other vital initiatives in the economic recovery act to help provide the stability our economy needs, initiatives include: helping farmers by extending the existing tax deferral available in regions affected by drought; ensuring that the province of Nova Scotia continues to receive a meaningful net fiscal benefit from its resources by resolving the crown share saga after decades of neglect by the previous Liberal government; improving transparency and accountability in the use of taxpayer dollars by mandating that all federal departments and crown corporations produce quarterly financial reports; ensure dependability for public broadcasting by increasing the borrowing limit for the CBC; and promoting global growth and co-operation by giving small and low income countries a bigger voice at the IMF while strengthening Canada's commitment to debt relief.

Canada's economic recovery act would provide a balance between stimulating our economy for the short term and building our capacity in the long term. In every region of Canada, families and businesses are paying less tax and unemployed workers are receiving better support and new training. Major job creating infrastructure projects

are breaking new ground. Colleges and universities are benefiting from new investments, and Canadian households and businesses are seeing improved access to financing.

Our Conservative government's economic recovery act would provide much needed stability for our country's economy. It is timely, targeted, temporary and cost-effective and it would lay the foundation for long term growth.

The Liberal leader would rather look at narrow, partisan self-interests and force an unnecessary election, jeopardizing the recovery and inviting a prolonged session. Now is not the time for political games but a time to recognize that our economic recovery remains fragile. We must stay focused and we must stay on course. We need to continue to implement Canada's economic action plan, supporting Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

As the *Calgary Herald* editor noted:

...the Canadian economy, when compared with outcomes in peer nations, vindicates [the Prime Minister's] claim to sound [fiscal] management...[the Liberals'] promise to vote against him can only be seen as a self-interested reach for power, at a dangerously sensitive time in the nation's recovery. It is irresponsible, as well as widely unwanted.

● (1145)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only stand here and shake my head after listening to those remarks. To even suggest that the government has sound fiscal management is so far from the truth it is unbelievable.

We have a Prime Minister who has taken a surplus that was left to him by the previous government and has driven this country into its biggest deficit in Canadian history. In fact, it was in deficit before the global recession started. The government just does not want to admit it.

I am absolutely shocked that the member for Huron—Bruce, which is the biggest hog-production sector in Canada, would get up and nary mention a word about hog producers. He talked a little about helping farmers. Does he think the Ponzi scheme, established by the President of the Treasury Board, will help Canadian hog producers?

Let me explain the scheme to him. Perhaps he just does not know because he is talking from the speaking points from the PMO.

Does the member support the fact that farmers will go and get a loan from the bank that is guaranteed by the Government of Canada, which is a start, at least it is guaranteed, but the first condition of that loan is that producers must pay back the advance payment program they received from the government last year, which is an unsecured loan from the Government of Canada? Farmers will be left indebted to the chartered banks or other credit institutions and in the process they pay off the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada gets its money securely and farmers are left further in debt with no hope and no future.

Government Orders

The government has been an absolute disaster for the farm community. How can the member for Huron—Bruce, which has a big hog-producing population, support such a Ponzi scheme exercised by his Minister of Finance?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Malpeque has never been short for words, as we all know. He does, however, support farmers as I support farmers.

He did come in late and the unfortunate thing is that we are actually debating Bill C-51 today. The support we are providing in Bill C-51, which he voted against, would provide support to farmers in drought and flood regions. In a way he is actually talking out of both sides of his mouth on this issue.

I think the member for Malpeque has an issue with the fact that all members of our government worked with pork producers, listened to pork producers, and delivered results in conjunction with them.

Just Friday, the final announcement came out, and today hog producers across this great country are talking with their banks. They are working on their transitional progress. They are looking at ways to market their products not only in Canada but also around the world. Our pork producers produce some of the greatest pork in the world.

I would encourage all Canadians to support their local producers, to buy Ontario, to buy Canadian, and not listen to the rhetoric from the member for Malpeque.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it took the member for Huron—Bruce a while to get to Bill C-51 as well in his speech, but when he did he dealt with some of the statistics that I am looking for on the home renovation tax credit program and the first time homebuyers program.

I would like to ask the member how many first time homebuyers have taken part in the program? I realize that at the end of the day we will not know until the year is up as to whether or not this program has been of benefit. The question is whether or not the program is the motivating factor for first time homebuyers in the first place, or it may be just because house prices have dropped and first time homebuyers are jumping into the market.

On the issue of the home renovation tax credit, my colleague mentioned that 4.6 million Canadians will be taking advantage of it. I wonder if that is a projected figure or whether he knows that to be the case.

I wanted to ask him too whether he would intervene with the parliamentary secretary and the minister to make certain that the government announces an extension of this popular program?

• (1150)

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the tax credit for first time homebuyers, I would suggest that all first time homebuyers will be able to take advantage of it because they will submit their claim through their taxes. I am sure he is relieved to hear that.

The home renovation tax credit is a popular program. I would just like to give a little commentary on what it means to the people of Huron—Bruce, the riding which I have the good fortune to represent. There is a tremendous number of hardwood bushes throughout my riding as well as a tremendous number of small

sawmills, kilns and two manufacturers of hardwood flooring that use local hardwood.

This is just an example of the absolute effectiveness of the home renovation tax credit. It is very vertical. It helps the forestry worker by purchasing logs; it helps the mill and the manufacturer; and it benefits local consumers with a terrific made in Canada product.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have not mentioned what they would cut differently. The last time there was a recession they cut transfer payments to the provinces by 40%, a tremendous hit on health care in Canada. I wonder if the member for Huron—Bruce could tell us if he thinks this might be one of the areas that the Liberals would ravage and once again use their time in government to attack those most in need.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that in our budget we stood up for Canadians. We continue to make investments in our health care system by increasing our health care transfers. We also made tremendous investments and commitments in standing up for Canadians by increasing our social transfers to the provinces.

This is a government that is not going to do what the Liberal government did in the nineties which slashed and burned to balance the budgets. We are investing in Canadians because we believe in Canadians.

It is just a real unfortunate thing that the Liberal Party has failed to support the home renovation tax credit by voting against it. In my short time as a member this is quite likely the most popular and effective initiative a government has taken and all of a sudden the Liberal Party has voted against it.

Obviously we are disappointed on this side of the House. We are focused on the economy. We are delivering results for Canadians and that is what we are going to continue to do.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know from the hon. member's participation in the human resources, skills and social development and the status of persons with disabilities committee that he has a very sincere interest in ensuring that we are doing things as a Parliament for those who are vulnerable and most at risk.

Some of the feedback I am getting with regard to the home renovation tax credit is that there are many people who pay a small amount of taxes or already get back the maximum in terms of rebate on the taxes that they pay. They claim that even though they have already gone ahead and done these renovations, many of them seniors on fixed incomes and people on disability programs, they have begun to see the roll-out and determined that it is actually a non-refundable tax credit that they may not benefit at all.

Is there any truth to that? Can the member clarify that and what do we say to those folks who have already gone ahead on goodwill and were excited about this initiative that they thought would be helpful to them as they tried to fix up their houses, particularly where energy efficiency was concerned, and now they are finding that they may not benefit from it at all?

Government Orders

Mr. Ben Lobb: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is aware of the program that is available to individuals such as he mentioned, but there are a number of excellent programs through CMHC which his constituents can look into for seniors, so that they can stay in their homes longer and for Canadians who have a disability, to allow them to stay in their homes longer. If he were willing to contact my office, I would be willing to show him where it is.

The department of human resources continues to deliver results for Canadians. Our office has worked with a number of constituents in Huron—Bruce to help seniors and those with disabilities stay in their homes and we will continue to deliver those results.

• (1155)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures.

I took the opportunity to attend the briefing session provided by the finance officials. There were a number of people there. I found it very interesting and found myself put at somewhat of a disadvantage. As we walked in the door we were given a copy of the draft bill, which is the bill now before us, to see it for the first time. There were no other briefing notes. There were no other documents that would explain why changes were being made. It was not about the precise words, but it was to indicate to the members the reason why this is being made.

Very often, the Library of Parliament will prepare briefing notes for members so that they can fully participate in debate from knowledge rather than from ignorance. I think it is very important. When we get important bills and initiatives from any government, accountability requires that it must explain or justify its words, actions or decisions in a manner that is true, full and plain.

That accountability has to not only happen after the government has done something but before it has done it and when it anticipates it should be done. People need to be informed about where a government is going and why. They need to be given an opportunity to prepare themselves. Members need to prepare in a reasonable fashion for debate in order to understand the nuances. Legislation is complex. This is basically an omnibus bill because it touches so many different acts.

With regard to this budget implementation act, in addition to the various credits and amendments in terms of the Income Tax Act, we also have changes to the Bretton Woods and Related Agreements Act, the Broadcasting Act, the Canada pension plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act, the Canada–Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act, the Customs Tariff, the Financial Administration Act, the Public Service Superannuation Act, and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act.

If members were expected to somehow comment on this bill, it would be extremely difficult in the little time that is allocated to individual members to make reasonable contributions to the whole act. One will notice that a number of the members take aspects of the act that they are somewhat familiar with and have something specific that they would like to provide input on.

It may be with regard to the home renovation tax credit or the Canada pension plan. I know that hon. members have received a lot of input on that. I think that most people would concede that allowing Canadians the opportunity to invest in their homes is a good thing because it does create jobs. That kind of improvement is a good thing to happen.

However, as I followed the debate, there seemed to be a big question about relevance and whether or not talking about the broader picture was relevant to the debate and in fact in order. I submit that this budget implementation act is pursuant to a budget. The budget is the government's vision, outlook and proposals to address the condition of the country.

We know that we are in a recession. We know that unemployment has risen to record levels. We know that the deficit, being the shortfall of cash inflows versus cash outflows, is growing to the highest level it has ever been in our history. It is around \$60 billion and it is expected to go much higher.

When we talk about a budget implementation bill, we are really talking about the budget, which is really talking about the government's plan to address the realities of a country.

• (1200)

It is very relevant for members to say that this bill, which is in part what is included in the budget, is part of something that some members believe is not the right track to deal with the problems facing the nation. It is not the right track with regard to saving current jobs or to promote future jobs in areas where there is the highest probability of creating jobs. It maybe does not hit the mark when it comes to dealing with a plan to get the country out of deficit over the long term.

The previous speaker talked about a prior Liberal government. His description was that it slashed and burned and all other good things. That is good rhetoric, but if the member were accountable to the House, he would have been truthful and plain about the facts. The facts are that in 1993 the then Liberal government inherited a \$42 billion deficit and a debt-to-GDP ratio that was terrible compared to what it is today. It meant one's ability to deal with it was terrible.

I can remember asking Paul Martin at the time about our strategy to balance the budget within a reasonable period of time. That first happened in 1997 and for 10 years since then there were balanced budgets, in fact tax cuts and the restoration of other cuts.

The question I asked him was how we explain to Canadians that this is the right approach to deal with the economic reality of the country. He said he had to impose cuts right across the board and the federal government would be the worst hit. The public service really took a big hit, Canadians took a big hit, our health care took a hit, and the provinces took a hit in terms of the transfers for social services and health care costs. He told me that he had to cut 20% to save the 80% left, and once the government could stabilize the situation, just like a doctor dealing with a patient, then it could build back.

Government Orders

There was a lot of pain and nobody is going to doubt that. However, we should understand that the books were balanced and the financial integrity of Canada was restored within three years from a \$42 billion deficit inherited from Brian Mulroney. That in fact carried over to the current government, which took over in 2006.

I have forgotten what the deficit was at the time. The election was in January 2006, Parliament did not start until April, the cabinet was not even formed at that time, and I believe the surplus for the year ended March 31, 2006, was some \$17 billion. The current government inherited not only balanced books but a surplus, which allowed it latitude and flexibility to be able to continue to offer tax cuts to Canadians and also to restore program funding, where necessary, to meet the urgent needs of Canadians.

I do not apologize for what happened there. When one has a terrible situation, one has to make tough decisions. Paul Martin always said that government is about making tough decisions.

I never judge a government by what it does when times are good; I judge a government by how it responds when things are going bad. That is important for individuals as well. It is really easy to boast when everything is rosy, but what happens when it hits the wall? How do people show composure, professionalism, knowledge and wisdom to address a situation in the most appropriate fashion? Those are the kinds of things we are talking about.

I cannot talk about everything in this bill, but I went to the briefing session. I was sorry we did not get the briefing notes from the officials. They had panels come forward on each and every one of the items that are dealt with in this implementation bill. I wish they had given us their notes. They had notes, because they explained it to us. When I asked if I could have the notes, they said I would have to write my own from whatever they said. That was not very helpful and I did not think it was very accountable, but so be it.

• (1205)

I talked about and asked questions about the home renovation tax credit when it first came out in the budget. I had to read it a couple of times because there was one aspect, and this will show how members of Parliament may have input into important legislation such as this for our country.

I noticed that the home renovation tax credit, as it said in the initial language, was available to the registered homeowner or joint owners of that dwelling. What if we had a situation where there was a couple, the stay-at-home spouse brought the house into the marriage and the other spouse was the working spouse, but when they got married they did not change the registration to both of them? That means that the registered owner has no income and the home renovation tax credit would not be worth anything to them because they have no income taxes payable to which to apply a tax credit.

I immediately sat down with the finance minister and raised it with him. It was kind of interesting. He did not realize it. He said that it was not the intent and there was family law, division of assets and all that other stuff. One of his responses to me, and I do not think he will mind if I share this, was to ask whether I really thought the Canada Revenue Agency would check the registration of households before it gave out the credit. Probably not, but I was kind of hoping that the finance minister would not even make such a flippant remark,

because our legislation has to be grounded and rooted in sound decision-making elements and facts.

With regard to the home renovation tax credit, I wanted to inform my constituents, so I did a householder on it, laying out generally how it works. I talked about the dwelling, which could be a house, a cottage or a condominium. Renters would not be able to do anything. It was not clear to me, and I said it would have to be checked out, whether a person operating a business out of a home would qualify or whether there would be a reduction of the credit otherwise available. Then I saw that if two families shared the same dwelling, each would get one credit. These are the kinds of things I was letting them know about. I gave them some examples of eligible expenditures. I wanted to be sure that they knew that furniture and appliances and the purchase of tools, et cetera, would be ineligible expenses and not applicable for the credit.

I also indicated to them that these expenditures had to be made in a period after January 27, 2009, and before February 1, 2010, pursuant to agreements after January 27, 2009.

It is family-based. People should know that. It is important. That means one family gets a chance to do it, and a family includes children who are under age 18 at the end of 2009.

It does raise the question, though, that if a person has a child who is over 18 years of age and living in that dwelling, who has his own room over the garage, whether he can renovate his room and claim his \$1,350. He is not under the definition of family, but he certainly is a taxpayer. I am told that children sometimes do come back to the family home. To anybody who is in that situation I would suggest that they might want to consider, if they have a child over 18 years of age who has some designated area of the house that is his or hers, whether maybe he or she could qualify for this credit. It would be an interesting challenge to the Canada Revenue Agency.

I also dealt with the fact that people can do the work themselves or have others do it. This will probably surprise and maybe annoy some people who do not have disposable income to spend on renovations at this time, but the first \$1,000 of the eligible expenditures does not qualify for any credit. The first \$1,000 is on a person's own ticket. So it is the amount after that. That means that expenditures after that, up to an additional \$9,000, qualify for the 15% non-refundable tax credit. The person actually has to spend \$10,000, and the last \$9,000 is what is eligible for the credit.

• (1210)

Non-refundable means that it will be applied against taxes otherwise payable. If people have no taxes payable, it does not matter how much non-refundable tax credit they have, they do not get any refund.

People should understand that if there is any way to generate income in 2009, knowing that they will have unused credit, that would be a good thing to do. So they may want to crystallize some investments or whatever.

Government Orders

I also gave them some contact information, because I think there will be a few questions and perhaps a few peculiar situations that people were not aware of. I do encourage Canadians, if they do not remember any phone numbers, to just remember 1-800-O-Canada. That is the main number and will get them to whomever they have to speak to in order to get answers to questions.

Also at this briefing session I had a chance to engage the officials with regard to the CBC. When we mention the CBC in this chamber, Canadians get nervous. We know that. The CBC has had a very significant challenge. There are some who do not believe the CBC should be getting any funding from the Government of Canada. They believe it should compete with others on its own merit. I certainly do not hold that view.

We have a national broadcaster that holds this country together. It is probably, other than our health care, the only thing that keeps us all together. Whenever the CBC has gone on strike or had lockouts or that kind of stuff, Canadians en masse have told parliamentarians, "Deal with it; I miss my CBC".

Well, the CBC is going to be authorized to borrow \$220 million, up from \$25 million. I asked whether they could give me more details as to why they are doing this and what it relates to. It basically has to do with properties that the CBC owns that it is not using for its own purposes, so it is leasing them out and getting lease revenue.

If people have an annuity, being lease revenue coming in over this period of time, it is worth something and they can present-value it and discount it. They can in fact go to a financial institution and it may buy it from them. It will buy that right to receive those future payments for a lump sum today.

That is exactly what this is about. It is basically monetizing an asset, a stream of income. That means that the CBC is going to have the cash it needs today to address the severe the problems it has and the challenges, because in down times the CBC has trouble raising advertising revenue as well. It also has to make job cuts and has done so.

The concern, though, and I think many Canadians may agree, is that if the CBC is basically selling assets to take care of today's bills, what it is really doing is mortgaging its future.

My immediate reaction was that the fuse has been lit to the future privatization of CBC at fire-sale prices. It concerns me, and we have to watch this.

Finally, I want to talk about what the member for Huron—Bruce was talking about. I think his words were that we want to save jobs, we are saving jobs today, managing the economy for jobs for tomorrow, boosting the recovery and promoting economic stability.

I think those are laudable objectives. However, I can tell members that when we look at the unemployment line hurtling toward 10% and then look at the words the Conservatives said, that they want shovel-ready infrastructure projects to save today's jobs and to provide jobs in those areas that have the highest prospect of growth, "shovel-ready" to everybody in Canada means that as people are losing their jobs or that curve is starting to go up, they need to have those projects going.

What has really happened, and it is a real shame, is that the infrastructure cash, the cheque to the people for these projects, has not happened, has not tracked with the unemployment curve, and therefore, the job need. They have missed the boat.

I think the government has failed miserably on the infrastructure program, and I hope Canadians will understand it appears that it really did not want to inject stimulus at all in the first place.

• (1215)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all understand that the Liberal leader has lost confidence in the Conservative government, but based on the ramblings of the member's speech, I think the Liberals have lost confidence in the integrity of Canadians, which is very shameful. Indeed I doubt that they ever had confidence in us.

However, the issue now before the House is the current bill, Bill C-51, which addresses the economic recovery for Canada.

The Liberal leader says he would enact these measures but only after an election. The fate of Bill C-51 is not in question. It is going to pass.

Why will the Liberal members not demonstrate their resolve to get Canada moving as quickly as possible by voting for Bill C-51? Why will they not join all members of this House and put Canada first?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my speech, and maybe the member missed the beginning of it, the budget implementation act deals with parts of a budget. It is the budget that is the plan.

Mr. Mike Wallace: He supported it.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question if he would stop yelling at me. The member for Burlington is a chronic whiner, for Pete's sake.

I really think it is important to take it in the context that I put it. When we deal with a budget implement act, we deal with the budget and the government's manner in which it plans to address the problems of the nation.

The Liberal Party has lost confidence in the government's ability to address the economic recession, to address job loss, to address recovery, to address the elimination of a \$60 billion deficit. That is non-confidence. It is directly addressing this bill.

I love some things in the bill, but we cannot just say we like some things so we will take everything else. On balance, the package does not meet the requirements that Canadians have of their government.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unlike the member for Burlington, I enjoyed the speech from the member for Mississauga South.

Government Orders

I have noticed that he does not necessarily follow the Liberal line and the Liberal caucus on a number of bills. I know on Bill C-23, the Canada-Colombia trade act, he has some independent thought on it as he has on some other bills. I admire him for stepping out of the box a little and not blindly following his caucus. As well, he was the only Liberal member not to say how he would vote on the bill. He spent some time talking about the issue of relevance.

I appreciate the fact that there is some latitude given here, but the members have to deal with Bill C-51 at some point during their speeches. That is what we are dealing with at this point.

I suspect he is like the person looking through the department store window. He really wants to be on this side on this issue, but he has to stand up to his caucus and say so.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, first, I thank the hon. member for his kind words. I appreciate it very much. We are under a microscope at all times. We will leave this place one day and I know all hon. members want to leave here with their good names intact. I know we are all trying to do that.

I do not want to repeat what people have said, I want to be able to add to what has been said.

I was elected a member of the Liberal Party. I am a member of the Liberal caucus. We have a very large tent that embraces all kinds of thinking. Just like a cabinet, which never has unanimity on everything, once we take a decision, part of the rules of the game is we are all then together.

Now we are faced with this implementation bill. I am not happy about the CBC provision. I am not happy about the Canada pension plan provisions. People under 65 who take early retirement will get a lower pension. People who defer it past age 65, those who do not really need the money, will get a higher pension. It makes no sense to me.

The home renovation credit is important. It is a good initiative, one little initiative that will promote stimulating jobs, but there are already cases about some nasty people out there who represent themselves as home renovators but have no experience. There will be some nasty stories.

I will not support it, not because of any issue other than I do not believe it is part of a reasoned approach to address the problems that Canada faces.

• (1220)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to tie into the final comments made by the member opposite.

I listened with interest to his speech. He made some interesting points. I would first like to address his comment with regard to judging a government based upon what it doing during the bad times.

It is newsworthy, and maybe the hon. member has not heard, but today the Canadian finance minister will receive yet another international award. He is going to be in Istanbul to receive an award being presented to him by *Euromoney* magazine. He will be accepting this on behalf of the Canadian government. They are recognizing him as the finance minister of the year, recognizing what this government has done during tough times.

The World Economic Forum has indicated that Canada will lead other countries out of this downturn. We see the same type of analysis from the IMF.

I appreciate that the hon. member will judge a government by what it does during the hard times. Clearly he will join the ranks of the international community in recognizing that Canada is leading on this front.

However, in answering the last question, he went after home renovators. He said that there were some nasty people out there. I would give the member the opportunity, because I know he has plenty in his own riding, to withdraw that comment.

An hon. member: He is right.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, let us deal with the last one first. An NDP member just said “He is right” and I stand by it.

When we have an over-demand for services beyond well-established, reputable home renovation firms and experienced people, a lot of unemployed people go out and represent themselves and they do some shoddy work. If members ever watch Mike Holmes, they know that it happens in our world. I raise it as an issue that people should be cautious and check out the people.

If the member believes that the award going to the finance minister by *Euromoney* magazine in Istanbul is an indication that we are making our goals and everything is beautiful, he should look at our almost 10% unemployment rate, only 12% of infrastructure money getting out in cash and a deficit at the highest levels that we have ever had.

I do not understand where the member gets his ideas. He really should look at the facts. The facts are we are in deep trouble.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with him that the home retrofit program is not beneficial to everybody, but it is beneficial to some people.

Would he not think that it would have been better if the Conservatives has tied that in to greener housing and the retrofit strategy as opposed to allowing people to build docks, which does not really do much to contribute to a greener environment?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that we hit our first target squarely, and that is to create jobs.

The second target is one that I had the occasion myself to experience. I went to Home Depot. I wanted a new garage door because it looked really bad due to my son shooting hockey pucks and other things against it. We had to replace it. It wanted me to get an insulated door because I would get a higher credit. That is great, but my garage is not insulated.

I understand the member's point and she is quite right. If we can hit two targets with one bullet, go for it.

Government Orders

●(1225)

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to speak in support of the economic recovery act at second reading. The recovery act would implement key measures in Canada's economic action plan and other vital initiatives that would help to secure a strong recovery and protect jobs. Key among these measures is a set of important tax cuts that would support individuals and businesses right across Canada.

To begin with, this act would implement the temporary home renovation tax credit, or HRTC. The HRTC has proved enormously popular with millions of Canadians who will be able to receive up to \$1,350 in tax relief on eligible home renovations completed before February 1, 2010. The temporary nature of this tax would provide an immediate boost for Canadians to take on new renovations or speed up already planned projects.

The HRTC is encouraging Canadians to invest in the long-term value of their homes and is increasing the demand for labour, building materials and other goods and services, helping to create more jobs and stimulating our economy when it is needed most.

Do not take my word for it, listen to the feedback we are hearing from right across the country.

Robert Dutton, Rona president and CEO, cheered:

We are happy to see measures such as the Home Renovation Tax Credit being implemented as we believe they will help stimulate the Canadian economy...This initiative directly benefits consumers and the industry while also helping save Canadian jobs.

Paul Straus, Home Hardware CEO, gave the HRTC a big thumbs up. He said, ““That’s been a big help to many of the retailers and certainly we’ve benefited from that”.

Canada's premier celebrity contractor and television personality, Mike Holmes, heralded:

Most homeowners have heard by now of the home renovation tax credit, and many are taking advantage of it. The idea of the tax credit is to stimulate local economy by keeping contractors working and keeping building supply retailers busy. It's a win-win: Invest in your home, and invest in your local economy.

Moncton *Times & Transcript* columnist, Alec Bruce, said:

—Home Renovation Tax Credit (HRTC)...is arguably the smartest piece of micro-economic policy this government has yet written...This is precisely how the government stimuli should work. By providing incentives to improve the value of the most important assets most people ever own—their homes—the feds guarantee that public money flows back to communities and neighbourhoods, employing skilled tradesmen and women and leveraging private credit markets.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association, president Frank Giannone, heralded the measure, noting:

—renovators are also witnessing positive trends with increasing consumer interest as a result of the federal government's Home Renovation Tax Credit.

Building Industry and Land Development Association president Stephen Dupuis gives the HRTC his stamp of approval. He said:

There's no question that the renovation tax credit has been the most effective stimulus spending initiative the federal government brought forward last January. The tax credit is spurring economic activity while helping to combat the underground economy...

What about small business owners like Maurice Meagher, who owns a construction company in Halifax and was booked solid

through the summer building decks, patios and fences for Nova Scotians. He said:

Without [the HRTC]...maybe we wouldn't be getting these calls...People have been kind of sitting on the fence, looking at projects that maybe they'd be thinking about for a while.

Unbelievable as it sounds, the NDP finance critic, the member for Outremont, in the *Winnipeg Sun*:

—praised the Conservative government's home renovation tax credit...initiatives like that helped the economy because they got “hammers into hands quickly”...

The economic recovery act would also implement the first time home buyers' tax credit, putting up to \$750 back into the pockets of Canadians who bought their first home. This tax credit would also be available for individuals who purchased a home for the benefit of a related individual who would be eligible for the disability tax credit.

●(1230)

I am hopeful, but doubtful, that our Liberal colleagues are listening and reconsidering their decision to vote against the economic recovery act with such popular measures, a decision that they will have to explain to their constituents.

However, if neither the home renovation tax credit nor the first time home buyer tax credit are worthy enough for the Liberals to support, what about the enhancements to the working income tax benefit to help those who are particularly vulnerable during tough economic times? This benefit, often referred to as WITB, is targeted to support low income working Canadians. WITB is a refundable tax credit which helps make work pay by supplementing the earnings of low income workers to help ensure that these workers are financially better off by getting a job. It does this by reducing significant financial disincentives to find and keep a job due to having to pay higher taxes and receiving reduced social services support as their paid income increases. WITB also includes disability supplements in recognition of the fact that low income working Canadians with disabilities generally face even greater barriers to workforce participation.

Even the Liberal leader on page 20 of his 2006 book, “Agenda for Nation Building”, claimed that no other measure would do more to strengthen the spine of equal citizenship than a working income tax benefit. When our Conservative government first introduced the WITB in budget 2007, he and his fellow Liberals shockingly voted against its creation. Now the economic recovery act will, as outlined in budget 2009, effectively double the benefits through WITB, increasing its estimated value for low income Canadians by \$518 million for 2009. In subsequent taxation years, he probably boasts that he will vote against it.

The Liberal leader will be shamefully voting against more than 1.5 million Canadians that will benefit from the WITB for the 2009 taxation year even despite the fact that enhancement to the working income tax benefit has already garnered wide praise.

Government Orders

The OECD heralded the move stating:

Recent moves to increase the generosity of Canada's Working Income Tax Benefit are welcome, particularly given that the benefit is strongly targeted to the lowest-income households.

Food Banks Canada praised it commenting:

We called for increases to the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB), and the government's proposed improvement to the WITB is a welcome development.

The Caledon Institute of Social Policy applauded the enhancement writing:

The 2009 Budget's actions to enhance the Working Income Tax Benefit—an important recent addition to Canadian social policy—are laudable. They strengthen both key aims of the program—helping welfare recipients get over the welfare wall, and supplementing the earnings of the working poor. The investment in WITB will foster economic stimulus by sending more money to more working poor Canadians.

As odd as it may seem, the Liberal leader will likely vote against it as his Liberal leader edict. The Liberal member for Kings—Hants has given it a big thumbs up, telling his hometown paper, the *The Hants Journal* only months ago:

The Working Income Tax Benefit...has helped many working families and increasing it further will contribute even more significantly to helping make work pay.

Again, I am hopeful, but doubtful, that our Liberal colleagues have listened. I am doubtful that they have the capacity to push aside partisan self-interest, ignore their election-mad leader, do what is best for low income working Canadians and pass the economic recovery act and its enhancements to the WITB, and not scheme to force an unnecessary election that Canadians do not want and that could threaten what is an extremely fragile economic recovery.

Nevertheless, there is much more to the economic recovery act.

• (1235)

For instance, we are reaching out to hard-working farmers who have been hit hard by floods and have to dispose of their livestock by extending these farmers the same tax credit deferral that applies to farmers affected by drought. This is a move that Canadian Federation of Agriculture President Laurent Pellerin gave his nod of approval, saying:

This announcement is welcome news in assisting not only Manitoba livestock producers affected in the summer of 2008 get back on their feet. But it also has the potential to assist all Canadian livestock producers who may find themselves in the unfortunate position of having to liquidate their herds due to weather related events in the future.

Furthermore, on the issue of relief for businesses, the economic recovery act will relax tariffs on temporarily imported shipping containers, primarily by increasing the amount of time that such containers can remain in Canada on a duty tax-free basis from 30 to 365 days. This proposal, recommended by various reports and Canadian transport-related associations, will both promote the efficient movement of empty containers in Canada and improve the efficiency of our transportation network.

This action builds on the previously announced elimination of tariffs on a wide range of machinery and equipment in Canada's economic action plan that will lower business costs by an estimated \$440 million over five years and the recently announced public consultations to further eliminate all remaining tariffs on imported machinery, equipment and manufacturing inputs.

Our Conservative government's campaign against tariffs will provide a short-term boost and a long-term competitive edge for Canadian industry and lead the charge against the threat of creeping protectionism around the world. Daniel Ikenson from Cato's Center for Trade Policy Studies, an influential American think tank, said, "Canada is doing a great thing. The idea of lifting tariffs frees up businesses, lowering their costs. It shows the United States the proper way to emerge from global recession. We should be moving towards reducing barriers, not imposing them".

Together, we will have the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the leading industrialized countries by 2010. This adds up to a big Canadian advantage for attracting businesses and the jobs they create. Thanks to the business income tax reductions introduced by our Conservative government since 2006, the business tax rate will continue to fall from more than 22% to 15% by 2012. Provinces have added to their efforts by reducing their corporate income tax rates, helping Canada move closer to our Conservative government's goal of a 25% combined federal-provincial tax rate.

We have been seeing the impacts of these business tax reductions recently. Tim Hortons, a homegrown Canadian icon that was forced to flee the high business taxes under the former Liberal government, has reorganized as a Canadian company once again. As a *Calgary Herald* editorial claimed:

Talk about a double-double blessing!...Canada's national coffee—Tim Hortons—is leaving Delaware and coming home, for all the right reasons. That is, after years during which Canadian business rightly complained of being at a tax disadvantage compared to its U. S. competitors, the pendulum has swung...However, it shows Canada is doing something right...That a company such as Tim Hortons is prepared to go through the upheaval of moving its head office to take advantage of a lower tax environment shows business tax cuts by successive federal governments are starting to work...Timmies may well be starting a trend.

However, our tax relief measures are also benefiting thousands of businesses that are so vital to our communities and economy. Thanks to measures taken by our Conservative government, small businesses can retain more of their earnings for reinvestment, expansion and job creation through an increase in the amount of small business income that is eligible for a reduced federal tax rate of 11%.

That amount is \$500,000 this year, up from \$400,000. Through Canada's economic action plan, the economy recovery act, our Conservative government is providing tax relief that will encourage economic growth and create jobs for Canadians.

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Indeed, since our Conservative government formed government in 2006, we have been working to reduce the tax burden on Canadians from the day we took office. We have provided and continue to provide tax relief that leaves money in the hands of Canadian families and businesses, where it belongs, to encourage growth and boost our economy.

● (1240)

We have slashed taxes by \$220 billion for individuals, families and businesses over the next five years. Tax freedom day fell on June 6 this year, nearly five days earlier than under the former Liberal government.

The tax reductions in Canada's economic action plan reinforce our government's goal to foster a tax system that improves standards of living and investment in Canada.

In my short time here today I have presented but a few highlights of our economic recovery bill related to reducing the tax burden on Canadians.

While there is much more to this important legislation from strengthening pensions, to promoting global growth and cooperation, to improving government transparency and accountability, to supporting public broadcasting, and much more, it regrettably appears that Liberal members do not care enough to discuss them.

The Liberal leader wants to plunge Canada into an election regardless of what it would mean for Canadians or our economy and our recovery. Little wonder the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* editorial said of the Liberal leader, "For [the Liberal leader] to propose such a thing only makes him sound patronizing and out of touch".

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remain shocked at the message coming out of the government backbenches. Do those members really believe what they read?

The member for Medicine Hat talked about working to reduce the government's tax burden. The previous Liberal government gave the biggest tax break in Canadian history. The Conservatives took a surplus and presented the biggest spending budget in Canadian history. They misinformed Canadians about the deficit they were entering. They may be reducing taxes a little bit, but now they are leaving Canadians, our children and grandchildren, with the biggest deficit in Canadian history. How is that going to be paid?

The member should tell the whole story. The Conservatives might have reduced taxes in one area, but they are leaving the biggest deficit in Canadian history, a burden on this country's future.

I have a simple question and that is about what is not in this implementation plan.

In 2006 the Prime Minister promised the farm sector, an area that the member for Medicine Hat should know well, cost of production. It was missing in the budget and it is certainly missing in this document.

Could the member please tell me why the Prime Minister broke his word on delivering cost of production to Canadian farmers?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do believe that we are reducing taxes for Canadians from all ends of the country. As part of any funds, the member ought to know that our Conservative

government paid off over \$37 billion of national debt. We have reduced taxes everywhere across the board for business, for home owners, for low income people. We have increased seniors' ability to—

● (1245)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours: Now there's a deficit of \$56 billion.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Just a minute. I am actually speaking if you would not mind, sir.

We have reduced taxes all across this country. Canadians understand that. They also understand that the Liberal Party wants to have an election. If we were to actually look at where the deficit originally started, that individual might want to check his party's record back in the days of a former prime minister—

Hon. Wayne Easter: Brian Mulroney.

Mr. LaVar Payne: No, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, my friend.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to build on the previous question. The member from the Liberal Party actually talked about the biggest deficit in Canadian history, but let us not forget that it was supported by the Liberals.

The Conservative member talked about reducing taxes and how his government has been able to do that. We want to congratulate that member in another way. We have to realize that the Conservatives also reduced the social safety net for Canadians, which is very problematic these days.

Does the member not think that the home renovation tax credit would have been better directed toward greener housing and energy retrofits because that is the direction we need to go in? Maybe the government should consider that.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, our government has done more for Canadians in the last four years than any other government has done without offloading taxes to the provinces. We are increasing our eco-energy investments. We are putting money into housing.

We are putting millions and millions of dollars toward helping Canadians right across this country on green energy projects and our various programs. We are getting the job done.

Mr. Bev Shiple (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to listen to the folks on the other side about the surplus they think they left. It is interesting how they arrived at that conclusion, after taking \$15 billion out of EI, after cutting all the transfers to the provinces on social services and health, after not paying any attention to our partners and colleagues in the provinces and not dealing with equalization at the cost of some \$23 billion.

We have reduced taxes by \$220 billion. There are 20 more tax-free days now than there were before we became government. One of the things they do not understand is that cutting taxes is good for Canadian industry, businesses and families.

Government Orders

They talk about our spending, and then they continue to tell us to spend, spend, spend. I am wondering why the Liberals would vote against the implementation of the home renovation tax credit, against a tax credit for first-time home buyers and against farmers.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, it certainly makes one wonder why opposition members would not vote for this bill and particularly for farmers.

I would also like to point out at this time that when we became government, we had the opportunity to reduce the GST. That is something the former Liberal government said it was going to do in its red book. Did the Liberals do it? No, they did not. Our government reduced the GST from 7% to 6%—

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would not want the record to be wrong. It is not unusual for the Conservative government to provide the wrong message. The fact of the matter is that was not in the red book. It was a promise by one member. She stepped down and ran again and was re-elected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I am not sure that is a point of order.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, I will continue.

Our Conservative government reduced the GST from 7% to 6% and then from 6% to 5%. Guess where the money from the reduction of those taxes goes. It goes to every Canadian. Canadians, particularly low-income people across the country, now have the opportunity to buy more goods.

Our government is doing the right thing. We have provided money for Canadians in tax relief.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised at the member's confidence in the government. I am looking at his own fiscal documents. It is true that in the first two years the government paid down about \$25 billion worth of debt. In the next two years, however, it borrowed \$60 billion.

I wonder how the hon. member could justify his confidence in the administration of the government if in fact over the four years it was in charge of the nation's finances it ran down the bill by \$25 billion and ran it back up by more than \$60 billion. How does he see that as a matter of confidence?

• (1250)

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, in terms of our government and the confidence I have, it is obvious. Around the world we are being lauded for what we are doing in terms of our economic action plan. As well, we have made reductions in taxes. Our finance minister is getting another award. That tells people across this great land of ours that we are doing the right things, not what the Liberal folks would like us to do.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

I am rising today to speak to Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures. I would like to speak to a few of the policies that are covered by this piece of legislation. I am

going to focus on a couple of items in this legislation, in particular, payments to be made out of the consolidated revenue fund for offshore petroleum resources, the CBC, the home renovation tax credit, and if there is time, changes to the CPP.

The first issue I would like to address is the \$174.5 million for Nova Scotia under the offshore agreement. I would like to thank our former colleague, Bill Casey, the former member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, for the time and effort he gave to this issue, and also for his commitment to keeping all Nova Scotia MPs across party lines updated on Atlantic accord issues.

The federal government did not keep its word. It did not abide by law. It completely ignored and did not honour the original Atlantic accord. I believe that Nova Scotians, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are still getting short shrift. There was an agreement and the government did not keep up its end of the bargain.

However, the government did come to a second agreement with Nova Scotia to try to mitigate the damage caused by not honouring the first agreement. We have been waiting and waiting for this money.

The NDP has been pressuring the government to at least honour the second deal. Thanks to our continued pressure the government is taking the first step toward treating Nova Scotia properly, fairly and with respect.

This money is a step in the right direction. It is a good thing for Nova Scotians, and it is a good thing for Nova Scotia. While I would like to see the next step toward honouring the Atlantic accord, and I hope that the government does work with my premier towards that end, I am very pleased to see this first step towards giving Nova Scotia the respect that it deserves. This is yet another reason that we do not need an election right now. What we need is to see this money get to Nova Scotia.

I will be very proud to stand up and cast my vote in favour of this bill if only for this measure alone, the \$174.5 million for Nova Scotia. I am sure that all Nova Scotians would agree with me.

There is also a change to the loan provisions for the CBC in this bill. New Democrats have been calling for these types of changes for some time. I have spoken in this House about the cuts to the CBC in Halifax. We lost programming in the form of reduced time for *Maritime Noon*, a maritime-wide call-in program. It is an opportunity for maritimers to stay connected, across the Bay of Fundy and across the Northumberland Strait. It talks about issues facing our region.

It is an important show for allowing debate and discussion and the free exchange of ideas. On any given day one can tune in and hear about something as specific as regional gardening tips to ideas as broad as the international response to climate change. The cuts to *Maritime Noon* are a little snapshot from my corner of the country about how these cuts are affecting Canadians and our public broadcaster.

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My colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, has worked hard on this issue both inside and outside the House. In fact, he said in a speech, “These job losses were completely avoidable. All it required was his signature so that they could get a bank loan or bridge financing, and it would not have cost the taxpayer a cent”.

The Conservatives have responded by increasing the amount of money the CBC can borrow in order to bridge that financing. This is what the NDP has been calling for.

In many of our communities from coast to coast to coast the CBC is a vital part of the communication link. This measure that has been introduced will only strengthen the CBC.

I will be supporting this bill as it contains positive measures, like the home renovation tax credit, the first-time home buyers tax credit and drought relief for livestock owners. However, I am not kidding myself that this is some sort of grand vision for Canada during an economic crisis, because it is not.

● (1255)

I support the home renovation tax credit because Canadians are relying on it, but earlier this week my colleague from Western Arctic pointed out that he saw a rather large sign outside a hot tub emporium which stated that the tubs were available under the home renovation tax credit, that if people bought these hot tubs and installed them, they could be eligible for the home renovation tax credit. We are all trying to reduce our energy consumption and the government purports to take our international obligations about climate change seriously. This is a great example of why policy should have direction.

I believe in government. I believe that governments are there to provide direction. They are not there simply to enable more consumerism. They are there to help Canadians make good choices.

New Democrats have often called for a tax credit or for programs for retrofitting houses that would actually have a green energy focus, not just renovations, but green renovations. This tax credit does not do that. Almost anything could be done with the tax credit, like putting in a hot tub on a new deck.

Before I was elected I worked with the provincial government and the utility in our province on energy efficiency programs. Energy efficiency is absolutely our greatest resource right now. If we could reduce our consumption of fossil fuels, it would be like finding a new source of energy. It would be like an oil field's worth of efficiency.

Energy efficiency could also create jobs. The Suzuki Foundation put out a paper called “Cool Solutions to Global Warming”. In its analysis the foundation said, “Investments in energy efficiency have been found to produce four times more jobs than equivalent spending in new supplies of conventional energy”. That is an oil field's worth of jobs.

There we have it. We could have a positive impact on the environment, a positive impact on making life more affordable for Canadians. The government could have a profound impact on job creation, if only the government would realize that government has a role in providing direction to Canadians. It has a role in helping us make good choices.

I will turn briefly to the proposed changes to the Canada pension plan. This bill would make amendments that would allow people to collect their CPP without actually having to stop work. It would increase the number of low-income years that a person could drop from the calculation of his or her career earnings. Among a few other measures, it would allow people to contribute past the age of 65.

The measures introduced would allow for greater flexibility and choice for people approaching their retirement years. These are very good first steps to reforming the CPP and are worthy of support. However, I remain hopeful that these are just first steps and that the government will honour its obligation under the unanimously passed motion that my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek moved.

The motion put forward by the NDP states that we need to expand and increase the CPP, QPP, OAS and GIS to ensure that all Canadians can count on a dignified retirement. Would that not be something if people could have dignity in their retirement? Bill C-51 does not do this, but I am hopeful the government will begin its expansion of these pension programs soon, as 30% of Canadians are without retirement savings and seniors in my riding are struggling to get by on their meagre pensions.

In summary, I will be supporting this bill. The NDP has decided that it will look at each bill on a case by case basis and see if it is in the best interests of Canadians. According to the measures that have been introduced, we will be supporting it, but we are hopeful that this is just the first step toward a grander vision for understanding that government does have a role to play during this economic crisis.

● (1300)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for an excellent speech, which probably was the first speech all day that dealt exclusively with Bill C-51, the bill at hand.

I would like the member to elaborate a bit on how the tax credit for green renovations would and should work. I thought that was a very intriguing part of her speech and I would like her to expand on that a little bit more.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, different ideas have been thrown around about what this would look like. It could be a tax credit that is specifically for green measures, but there has been a lot of talk in the past about actually having a program for energy efficiency retrofits.

There was the EnerGuide for housing and there was also a program that lasted about three weeks, the EnerGuide for low income households. The EnerGuide for low income households program had a few flaws. It could certainly have been improved but it was an incredible step toward trying to help low income households meet their energy efficiency needs and actually do the retrofits. A person would go in and do an assessment of a home to figure out the most cost effective measures to take and it helped people pay for those measures.

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I have done work in Nova Scotia where we have shown that it is cheaper to go into someone's house, insulate the roof, replace the windows and have the energy consumption go down than it would be for us to build another coal-fired power plant in 10 years, which is really the way we are heading because of our increased consumption.

There are different models for these programs. I would suggest that we look to the United States because it is doing wonderful work on low income energy efficiency projects.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about the CPP and about how one of the measures in here would allow people to access that a bit earlier.

I am just wondering if she has any comments to make or worries with regard to whether people who are on CPP disability would find themselves at a disadvantage, and that long term care programs or insurance programs would force them to apply for CPP earlier.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I am unsure about the impact that these measures would have specifically on CPP disability. However, with regard to the CPP, I met with some folks in a seniors residence a couple of weeks ago who told me that their CPP and OAS cheques had gone up by 46¢, which is not very much money when a senior is living hand to mouth and the costs of essentials are steadily rising. The interesting thing is that the same person showed me her electricity bill which had gone up by about \$46. It is clear that CPP, OAS and GIS are not keeping pace with the cost of living.

We really need to move forward on this motion that was brought forward by the NDP and passed unanimously. It is time for us to take a look at the pension program to ensure all seniors are able to live with dignity.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that the member dealt with the CPP amendments in Bill C-51 as merely first steps. She went on to explain some other options that we as a party see that we should be developing here to improve pensions. I would like her to expand a little further on her ideas there.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, we need improved averaging proposals that are not grandfathered. Currently, pensioners cannot recalculate their benefit levels to improve their pensions and this is a real problem.

We need to look at GIS and OAS enhancement, as I stated earlier, and we need to look at addressing the needs of those eligible non-claimants who are over the age of 70.

Those are just a few of the issues that we need to look at.

Again I go back to this motion that we passed and it is time for us to move forward on it.

• (1305)

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and privileged to be sharing my time this morning with the member for Halifax, a new member of the House of Commons who has proven herself over the last couple of years as a capable, well-researched and hard-working member. She was actually recognized by *Maclean's* magazine and named best rookie of the year for the year 2009.

Maclean's states:

In less than six months in the House, she has attracted an unusual amount of notice—enough to win her the best rookie MP title in the *Maclean's* poll of her peers.

I congratulate her very publicly for that.

However, it is not just since she has been here. I think people need to recognize this and, because of it, be willing to listen very closely to the advice that she gives in this place and to the voice that she brings to the House of Commons on behalf of so many who have no voice and cannot find the place to have their voice heard. For example, when she was back home in the wonderful city of Halifax, she was part of the Community Coalition to End Poverty. She was part of the Metro Immigrant Settlement Association's legal workshops for newcomers. She also participated in the Dalhousie Association of Women and the Law.

She also was the developer of a very unique and helpful project in Halifax called the "Tenant Rights Project". She was also awarded for her excellent community development work and her social justice activism in Halifax.

People can get all this information if they google the member. I would suggest that anybody who wants to understand how this place works and the voices that are here, they might want to do that.

She was awarded the Muriel Duckworth award for raising consciousness of women's issues and feminism in the legal community and also the CBA Law Day award for encouraging and promoting access to justice.

As I said, I am very pleased to be sharing my time with such an accomplished, effective and now recognized member of this chamber.

I want to put a couple of thoughts on the record today on Bill C-51 that we are debating.

First, for all the reasons articulated by the member for Halifax, I also will be supporting Bill C-51 but I must say that I do it with a heavy heart. Even though there are some things in this bill that would be helpful to some people, I have some real concern about the overall agenda of the government and whether it understands fully how we got ourselves into this very difficult economic circumstance in the first place and if in fact it has a program to get us out of it.

I will use a couple of the initiatives that the government has brought forward to show the shortcomings and how it is that even though it may make a difference for some people it would not go that full distance to make it better for everybody.

Government Orders

For example, the renovation tax credit, which was announced to great applause in this place and across the country, it turns out that at the end of the day it will probably not benefit those at the low end of the income scale because it is a non-refundable tax credit. Therefore, if people do not get anything back on their taxes or if they do not pay taxes because their income is so low but they have already done the renovations that they thought they were going to get a tax credit back for, at the end of the day they may end up not getting a tax credit at all.

In my view, the renovation tax credit is very short-sighted. It should have been a refundable tax credit and perhaps could have been done differently. It could have focused on those who really needed it in these difficult times to renovate their homes, particularly from an energy efficiency perspective so they could change their windows and doors, put more insulation in or buy more efficient furnaces. That would have gone a long way toward helping people on fixed incomes who are trying to stay in the little homes they have been able to purchase over the years and are struggling now to pay the bills on. That is just one of the initiatives in this bill that I would suggest the government take another look at.

● (1310)

On the other end of the age spectrum, the initiatives in the bill that my colleague from Halifax has spoken to, such as the improvements to the CPP program, will help some seniors but for other seniors who have worked all of their lives, many very hard in workplaces that were very challenging, the government is saying that instead of increasing the CPP or OAS or giving a little bump to GIS that would cover the increasing cost of energy to heat their homes, as the member for Halifax suggested, the government has come up with a plan that actually makes it easier for seniors to continue to work.

It has been said that McDonald's was from birth to the grave work for people. That in fact will be what we will see in this country.

I understand that some seniors will appreciate this but for my money it would have been better had we focused on how it is that we might help seniors who have already done their life's work, raised families and helped build their communities. We need to allow them to enjoy some comfort and dignity in their senior years and those senior years should start earlier rather than later if for no other reason than it creates space for younger people to pick up good well-paying jobs.

Those are just two examples of why it is that even though we will support this, in a very unique and particular time with the economy still falling apart and many people being affected more and more every day we should, as a House of Commons and as different parties, be working together to support things that will be helpful, we think this does not go near far enough.

In my office in Sault Ste. Marie I am beginning to hear the voices of those who have been on employment insurance for a significant period of time and who are looking at it ending. There will be no new jobs for them so they will have very few choices to make. One choice will be to go on welfare, which we know is not nearly sufficient. EI in the first place is not sufficient, but when people fall onto welfare it becomes a different world altogether. People who will fall onto welfare will find that it is a difficult challenge to make ends meet, to keep body and soul together and to look after their families.

The other option they have will be to take on part time jobs. We already know that people working full time in many of those part time jobs that nearly always pay minimum wage are already living in poverty. If people are working part time at one of those minimum wage jobs, they will be falling even further into poverty. The government has no comprehensive program or role to play in eliminating poverty or dealing with poverty, particularly in these very difficult times for hundreds of thousands of people across the country. I find it unconscionable that we would not be putting our minds to that and moving quickly here in this place as we debate initiatives that could be helpful to those most at risk and the most vulnerable.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the remarks of the member for Sault Ste. Marie. I tried earlier to ask questions of the government side but members seemed to produce answers straight out of the PMO. I know the member always gives direct answers.

In his remarks, the member seemed quite reluctant to support Bill C-51 and said that he did not think it went far enough. He talked about unemployment and the fact that it is a serious situation. As the member would know, people in Atlantic Canada would not benefit from these new measures and it is a problem. I am wondering if the people in Sault Ste. Marie would benefit from these new measures. Would they get the additional time?

Second, the government has now put Canada's economy into the biggest deficit in Canadian history. One of the ways it envisions getting out of that deficit is to increase payroll taxes to the tune of billions of dollars down the road. I wonder what the member's thoughts might be in that regard on the increased burden—

● (1315)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate and enjoy my interaction with the member from Prince Edward Island, and his passion about agriculture and agricultural issues.

Some in my community will benefit from the changes to EI but not many. There is a lot more to do.

I could not in all conscience, given that this difficult economy is affecting so many people, say no to the \$1 billion for the people who will benefit from it. I appreciate that coming from his part of the country, it is going to be even worse, which is unfortunate.

He raises one of the million dollar questions, and there are a lot of questions to which we are not getting answers, about what we do as we move forward. How are we going to deal with the deficit that we are running up and what are we going to do about it? How are we going to fight it?

He suggests, as we have detected in some of the material and conversation with the government, that perhaps a payroll tax is forthcoming. My concern is it will be similar to what previous governments have done to deal with deficits, and that is programs will be cut, particularly programs that support those who are most at risk and vulnerable in our society. That will be absolutely and totally unacceptable.

Government Orders

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are some benefits as far as CPP improvements are concerned. There is greater flexibility and choice for people approaching their retirement years. There is reduced incentive to early retirement, increased incentive for staying longer in the workforce, an improved averaging formula to boost pensions below the max and the voluntary contributions for post-65 claimants allowing for secure pensions to age 70.

This does not amount to a significant increase in security for seniors. In fact, 30% of Canadians are without retirement savings. Clearly more improvements need to be made in the area of pensions. Would the member elaborate on that point?

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Even though the amendments, which we support, will go a distance to help those seniors find decent work to help them pay for the increasing costs of energy, food and the many other things they need when they get to that age in life, my concern, as is his, is what do we do for the larger majority of seniors who have finished their work, who will not get other jobs except perhaps some part-time minimum-wage jobs? How will we reward our seniors who have done their work, built their communities, fought the wars and are looking for a dignified life and some comfort?

I agree, we need to be looking at an overhaul of the pension and retirement system. Our caucus member from Hamilton has tabled a very comprehensive package of reforms to pension and retirement income. Everybody in this place should look at that.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

It is an honour to rise in the House today and give thanks to the people of my riding of Etobicoke North, the community where I was born and raised. We are proudly one of the most diverse ridings in the country. We rank fifth of 308 Canadian ridings in terms of the 74% of people who are first generation Canadian, born into a Syrian, Italian, Somalian and other vibrant cultures.

Sadly, however, we also have major hurdles. Almost 20% of our residents are not yet citizens and often face language and job barriers. About 25% of families are headed by single parents who regularly work two jobs just to put food on the table for their children. Almost 20% of the riding is engaged in manufacturing, the second highest percentage for the entire country. In stark contrast, only 5% are involved in management, the 301st ranking of 308 ridings in Canada.

Etobicoke North is also one of 13 at risk neighbourhoods identified by the city of Toronto and United Way. Our community wrestles with many socio-economic issues related to unemployment, namely affordable housing, education, family breakdown, poverty and violence. In mid-August we tragically experienced three murders within only a few weeks.

Many Etobicoke North families struggle to make ends meet when the economy is booming, but the economy is struggling and the government's policies have hurt our families. For example, the government promised it would not raise taxes, yet it announced a \$13 billion EI payroll tax grab.

Last September, the government said that there would be no recession. In October the government said that there were some good buying opportunities. In November it promised a surplus. However, 12 days later the Bank of Canada announced our country was in a recession. In December the government admitted it would run a \$20 billion to \$30 billion deficit. In January it was a \$34 billion deficit. By June a \$50 billion deficit and last month a \$56 billion shortfall.

The government put Canada on track for a deficit before the recession hit and now holds the record of the largest deficit on record, at \$56 billion.

Canada is the worse performing economy of the G7. EI enrolment has increased 63% since October 2008. Young people under the age of 25 have been particularly hard hit, with those receiving EI benefits increasing by 108%.

Statistics are clean, neat, tidy and do not adequately convey human suffering. My office serves 65 families each day. Last week, we met a young man who was accepted into university but who could not afford to go because his mother was out of work after having worked over 10 years in her company. Today she cannot find a job, he cannot find a job and they are at risk of losing their home. On Friday, we met a man age 59 years of age who had been living in his car for two years because he could not find a job.

It is not just those in manufacturing who cannot find a job. To date I have met over 75 internationally trained doctors who are working to earn their Canadian accreditation to practise. I have also met over 50 university professors, one who has two masters degrees, one PhD., two teaching certificates, speaks four languages and yet cannot find a teaching job in Toronto.

In the meantime these talented individuals work in call centres, drive taxis, wait tables or do whatever is necessary in order to support their families. Then they are laid off from call centres and they come to our office desperately looking for employment leads and help for their families. Many after seven years of contract jobs give up their dream to practise medicine in our country.

The last year has taken a tremendous toll on many of our Etobicoke North families that have lost work because auto, manufacturing and steel plants have closed. There are 450,000 more unemployed Canadians today than a year ago and the Conservatives' fiscal update predicts another 200,000 will join them in the coming year.

Government Orders

• (1320)

Our Etobicoke North families need jobs. Our youth see the opportunities other families have and ask, “Why not us?” In June I had the joy of attending the graduation at a local high school. Sadly, the valedictorian's speech was not like others, namely bright, full of hope and waiting for the next phase of life. Rather it was based on Dylan Thomas' *Do not go Gentle into that Good Night*. The theme was even if one was not from the right family, the right school or the right community, graduates should “rage, rage” and fight for what is duly theirs. I left saddened, distressed that our graduates thought that they were from the wrong side of the tracks, that they would never have the same opportunities as others their age and that some had already given up dreaming.

What makes change happen? It is investment and economic stimulus for community projects to create jobs for families.

Unfortunately, only 12% of the government's \$4 billion infrastructure program is getting shovels in the ground and actually creating jobs. Only \$71 million, or less than 1%, of the \$1 billion green infrastructure fund has been allocated. Only \$80 million, or less than 0.5%, of the \$2 billion municipal infrastructure lending program has been allocated. Only two projects, totalling \$5.4 million of the \$400 million set aside for housing for low-income seniors, have been announced.

The Liberal opposition supported economic stimulus spending, but withdrew confidence in the government after it used the money for political favouritism.

The government had the opportunity to invest in communities across this country, create jobs and make a difference to families. More jobs would have meant fewer hungry children. In Toronto we feed 90,000 children, up from 83,000 last year, every morning because hungry children cannot learn.

This week is Feeding Toronto's Hungry Students Week. It is proclaimed by Mayor David Miller to highlight the sad fact that one in three Toronto students lives below the poverty line and 41% of students arrive at school every day hungry. In the city's most at-risk communities, 68% of children go to school without breakfast.

Toronto District School Board trustee Howard Goodman shares, “The kids are hungry for a whole bunch of things. They're hungry for knowledge. They're hungry for experience and independence. They're hungry for affection, recognition and respect, but they hunger above all for food. If that core hunger for food is not fulfilled, they can't satisfy easily any of their other hungers.”

We are the only industrialized nation that does not have a breakfast program for our children. Less hunger would mean healthier children, more students staying in school, less youth looking for belonging in gangs and more young men and women eager to improve their lives if only they are given a chance.

We need jobs for the 23% of women-headed, single-parent families in my riding of Etobicoke North, who scramble every month just to make ends meet, yet lose almost a quarter for every dollar a man is paid. What would jobs for these women mean to their children, who are poor because their mothers are poor, and to child

care and early childhood education? We know there is a return on investment of \$2 for every dollar invested.

Real economic stimulus means needed projects for communities and jobs for families. This is development. It is not something abstract. It is real change in the lives of real people.

In closing, the future of Canada depends considerably on investing in families, as their economic health, physical health and social well-being determines the health of their children, who are the adults of tomorrow. As a first step to protecting the next generation, let the government fight for creating jobs for families.

• (1325)

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's speech from across the way. I want to commend her on her voice in the House. I appreciate the fact that we have been able to work on other things and have conversations about things that matter to our respective constituents.

I am concerned that we as members of Parliament come to the House in order to debate policy and do what is in the best interests of our constituents. The hon. member discussed at great length the necessity to create jobs immediately, to get people employed and hungry kids fed. I share those concerns with the hon. member.

We come here to discuss these kinds of policies. Our constituents do not want us to come here to debate politics. It seems like the hon. member's leader has engaged in a political debate over the last little while as to whether the government should survive or not.

What I can guarantee is that the jobs she is talking about will not be created by forcing an unnecessary and very costly election. Our constituents demand that we come here to debate the things that she was talking about.

We understand that this bill will pass, so I wonder why the hon. member will not stand, in the interests of her constituents, and support the measures that will ensure that hungry kids get fed, that her constituents do have jobs and that stimulus money does flow into her community. Why will she not support this bill so that we get on with the real work that our constituents—

• (1330)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I have indeed had good discussions.

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My concern is that when we look at where the investment has gone, we have seen a large percentage go to Conservative ridings. Last week, a Conservative candidate stated very clearly that the reason one of the ridings did not receive funding was because it was a Liberal riding.

Investment in child care is extremely important. It helps women and their families participate in the economy. Canadian researchers calculate a 2:1 economic and social return for every dollar invested in child care. American researchers demonstrate a 3:1 or 4:1 return for low-income families and show that childhood development programs could have a substantial payoff for governments in terms of improved labour skills, reduced poverty and increased global competitiveness.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that in opposition we can often have it both ways. We can demand that the government spend money and then criticize it when there is a deficit.

I would just caution members not to be shrill on the issue of the \$56 billion deficit when in fact just months ago we were demanding that the government bring in a stimulus package. Then, when it brought it in, we said it was not big enough and it should be larger.

In opposition we have a responsibility to not only criticize the government for deficits when they exist but also to offer suggestions as to how we should deal with the deficit, such as raising taxes. That is just one of the problems of being in opposition.

I know years ago in Manitoba a Conservative opposition member said, “Well, you know, in opposition, we can have it both ways; we can demand you spend money on a new bridge one day and the next day we can criticize you for increasing the deficit on that same bridge”. It is something that we have to be a little careful about when we are criticizing.

Other than that, I think the member gave a fine speech, as she always does.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, my concern is that government has to foresee the challenges coming down the line. In the summer of 2008 we were talking about good times and saying there would not be a recession. The government did not see the recession coming. There has been a global recession, but we also have to have accountability. The numbers have continued to climb. We must be accountable to Canadians.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. members opposite are all fussed about an “unnecessary election”, but this time last year we were in the middle of an unnecessary election. It was interesting to go back to the quotes of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance during that unnecessary election and find out what they were thinking at the time, or at least telling Canadians about the deficit.

The Prime Minister, on CTV *Question Period*, on October 12, said:

We're not running a deficit. We have planned a realistic scenario. We've got conservative budget estimates.

That is probably true; we do have Conservative budget estimates.

He said:

We've got a modest platform that doesn't even fill the existing fiscal room....

Before the Business News Network, he said:

I know economists will say that we can run a small deficit, but the problem is once you cross that line, as we see in the United States, nothing stops deficits from getting larger and larger and spiralling out of control....

Come on, I do not think so. Some economists will say it is probably true. It is more true than possibly what a politician running an election wants to tell the Canadian public. The finance minister, who should know the numbers better than most, on October 9, just a year ago, said:

We will not run a deficit.

On September 16, he said:

We're running a balanced budget, we're running a surplus, we're paying down debt, so our government finances are solid.

Even during that fiscal year, the finance minister and the Prime Minister were being a touch economical with the truth, because this fiscal year is not the first year that this government has run a deficit. It was the last fiscal year. It is the fiscal year during the election, that unnecessary election that we were told we did not need.

Deficits do not just spring out of nowhere; we actually have to work at it. We have to really work at mismanagement in order to take a \$13 billion surplus that we inherited from the previous government and run it into a \$60 billion deficit over a period of four budgets. The Conservatives started out with revenues, in really their first year of administration, of \$236 billion. The revenues then went up to \$242 billion and that is where they peaked. They went down to \$233 billion, and then down to \$223 billion, roughly where they were five budgets ago.

That is fine. We are all in favour of reduced taxes. If I listen to the members on the opposite side, they can hardly speak a sentence without using the phrase, “reducing taxes”, et cetera. I am all in favour of that. We all like to reduce taxes, but there is another side to that equation, which is that the Conservatives are spending and spending. They started out in, effectively, their first fiscal year with \$222 billion worth of spending, and over those years they ran it up to \$272 billion worth of spending. That is \$222 billion to \$272 billion, \$50 billion worth of increased spending. Meanwhile they destroyed or flatlined their revenues for a variety of reasons, largely having to do with the ideological predisposition to cut taxes at every corner.

Essentially, the Conservatives made a \$25 billion paydown on the debt, and we will even give them the \$13 billion from the previous Liberal government, so we will say that is north of \$35 billion, \$38 billion worth of paydown on the debt. That is all good stuff. We like that. In the last two years, they have run up the deficit by \$60 billion. So in that four- or five-year budget cycle, that period of time, they have essentially run the government into a deficit position.

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• (1335)

This is not even within the Mulroney era of deficits. The last time we had a Conservative administration it was \$42 billion. These guys have exceeded Mr. Mulroney and now it is \$56 billion.

I was amused at the fantasyland of going from September or October of last year, where they said they were not running a deficit, that the nation's finances were under control and they would not do the dumb things that were being done in the United States, to the fairy tale in November called "the fiscal update". The fiscal update showed a small surplus of \$1 billion.

They then induced upon themselves a political crisis and suddenly they got a little more realistic. Between the end of November and the beginning of February, we went from a small surplus to a \$34 billion deficit. Then we went from January and February to May of this year and we were up to a deficit of \$50 billion. As of last month, we were at a deficit of \$56 billion.

Lord knows what next month will bring as far as a fiscal update is concerned. Perhaps we will be getting more fanciful statements from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance saying that the nation's finances are under control, that it is a conservative budget. It certainly is that. It is a Conservative budget. It is a Conservative example of gross mismanagement of the nation's finances, and members wonder why the Liberal Party would withdraw confidence in the government.

The Prime Minister is given enormous powers in our system of government. He gets to control the executive of the government by appointing the cabinet. He gets to influence the judicial branch of government by appointing the justices who sit on the Supreme Court and all the ones below that. He gets to influence the legislative branch of government by appointing senators, and he of course has shown some great enthusiasm for appointing senators lately.

There is enormous power concentrated in one person and in one office, and the only thing that this system requires of the Prime Minister is that he maintain the confidence of the House, and he has not. He does not maintain the confidence of the House.

When we were allowing him to govern, he spent an inordinate amount of taxpayers' money ridiculing the leaders of our party, and I imagine those expenditure go on. He spends an inordinate amount of time and money destroying the nation's finances. We got to the point where enough was enough and the confidence of the Liberal Party has been withdrawn from the government.

One would hope that the government would learn its lessons but I have no great anticipation that it will do so. It appears to be the same gang that ran the Mulroney show, which ran deficit after deficit.

• (1340)

In four budget cycles, five if we want to count the tail end of the Liberal administration, we have gone from revenues of \$222 billion to revenues of \$223 billion, which is wonderful. They have flatlined it. Meanwhile, the population has grown over that period of time by a million people and expenditures have run from about \$209 billion to \$272 billion, an increase of \$63 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how you run your household, but I imagine that everybody sitting in this room has to run their households within their fiscal ability, and if they do not have an increase in their revenues, they cannot go crazy on their spending. The government has gone crazy on its expenditures and we will pay and we will pay and we will pay.

In today's news, there was an item about an Australian bank raising its interest rates. If one does it, they are all going to do it and the low-interest environment that the Bank of Canada has created here will go. If it goes, then all bets are off, because in terms of what we see here now, we ain't seen nothing yet.

• (1345)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly one of the things I do not understand is how the government can continue to spend and spend and spend. This comes from a very proud Liberal who helped to make sure that we got rid of the deficit. How could the government continue to spend and have decreasing tax revenues and possibly think that it can move forward without at some point having to deal with the deficit and having to cut many great programs? I am particularly concerned about seniors and pensions.

Could the member tell me how he thinks the government is going to be able to do that in the future?

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we have withdrawn confidence in the government is that we do not think it can govern anymore. We think we could do better. The next government is going to have to deal realistically with the fiscal mess that it is going to inherit. Something is going to have to give.

If my anticipation is correct that interest rates are going to take off, then the \$33 billion that we spend every year on interest to service the national debt will go through the ceiling. We will be talking \$35 billion, \$40 billion, maybe \$45 billion. That would inevitably constrain the fiscal capacity of any government. That is a fairly realistic scenario.

Even the governor of the Bank of Canada said that he can only hold the line until June of next year. If interest rates take off, then they take off for the government, everybody in this chamber, and everybody watching. The cost of a mortgage will go up. The cost of doing business will go up. Business will go down. The government will be in an even worse situation than it is now.

The Conservative government has not made the decisions that it could have made during the good times and we are caught in the whirlwind.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to the member. He talked about how he likes lower taxes and so forth, but that was not true in the last election campaign.

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That member wholeheartedly supported the green shift massive tax increase on Canadians. That tax increase was why Canadians voted largely against the Liberals. The Liberal massive carbon tax was rejected by Canadians. Everyone remembers that. I do not believe that member has ever actually supported any of the tax cuts that we brought in that have brought tax freedom day 20 days sooner.

A lot of other jurisdictions in Europe, and even the United States under President Obama, have brought tax cuts in for families and individuals and seniors as a method of boosting their economies. The member does not understand that.

He said that he has lost faith in the government and in the finance minister. *Euromoney* magazine has not lost faith in our finance minister. It named him G7 finance minister of the year. Maybe the member would like to speak to that. It is quite an honour for our finance minister to be acknowledged in such a fashion.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the hon. member could spend so much time on finance committee and learn so little.

It is very interesting that the finance minister should be awarded anything by any magazine, however obscure. Apparently his competition is not all that serious. The United States has a runaway deficit, trillions of dollars worth of deficit. Relatively speaking, the finance minister is only incompetent as opposed to grossly incompetent.

The point of the hon. member's little intervention was that somehow or another tax freedom day is sooner. There are no free lunches in this world. Tax freedom day may be a day or two sooner, but debt freedom day certainly will be later.

We are going to start going back up that horrible path. We thought we had learned a lesson but apparently we have not. We thought our finances would not resemble those of a third world nation. Apparently that is the fiscal ability of the Conservative government.

Is it therefore any wonder that we in the Liberal Party do not have confidence in the government.

• (1350)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obviously a great opportunity to speak today in support of the economic recovery act, an important piece of legislation to enact key parts of Canada's economic action plan, along with other crucial initiatives.

I understand the Liberal Party will vote against this legislation, sight unseen, for no reason other than to force an unnecessary election which no Canadian wants. It is my hope in today's debate, along with colleagues on this side of the House, to show that now is not the time for that sort of self-serving opportunism.

The stakes for Canadians and their families are high. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood does not understand that the stakes for his constituents are high. He mentioned a moment ago that he is surprised I spent so much time on the finance committee and did not get it. He has been on the finance committee a lot longer than I have, in fact he is a former parliamentary secretary to the minister of

finance, and he still does not get it. So I guess I still have some time by his scale to get it. Maybe I will catch up, I do not know.

We simply cannot play political games because we cannot jeopardize a recovery with an unnecessary election. Catherine Swift, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, warned recently:

We've got some good news.... [W]e've been seeing three months of good recovery...we got the highest confidence level in over two years.... All we need is a stupid election to put things right back in the tank. What we need is certainty. Elections do not produce certainty.

I am going to digress for a minute. I mentioned the Liberal green shift. The Liberal green shift means anything but certainty for business.

Catherine Swift said that what we need is certainty and that elections do not produce certainty. With the economy turning right now, this is a bad time to have it. She said that we are just seeing things come back, that we are just seeing confidence come back.

It is clear that we must stand together with our global partners and stay the course. We must keep our focus squarely on protecting our economy and building on the success of Canada's economic action plan and stabilizing our economy.

As declared in the G20 leaders' statement following the Pittsburgh summit:

Our forceful response helped stop the dangerous, sharp decline in global activity and stabilize financial markets.

A sense of normalcy should not lead to complacency.

The process of recovery and repair remains incomplete. In many countries, unemployment remains unacceptably high. The conditions for a recovery of private demand are not yet fully in place. We cannot rest until the global economy is restored to full health, and hard-working families all over the world can find decent jobs.

Clearly, Canada must stay on track by continuing to implement our economic action plan and its related components, like the economic recovery act. This is fundamental to securing Canada's success in the face of ongoing economic challenges.

As expected, to date, Canadians have risen to face these challenges head on and allowed our economy to outperform where others have struggled. This has lessened the recession's relative impact. A sentiment shared by private sector economists, CIBC World Markets forecast that Canada will lead all industrialized nations in economic growth next year, while RBC economists expect that Canada's recession will turn out to be the least severe of the past three.

Our Conservative government has supported the efforts of Canadians with an unprecedented and timely stimulus contained in Canada's economic action plan, representing \$61 billion in effective targeted measures.

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Only last week we confirmed in the third report to Canadians on the implementation of the action plan that 90% of its 2009-10 funding is now committed. Canadians will continue to benefit from what is proportionately the largest fiscal stimulus package among all G7 partners with a projected 220,000 jobs being created or maintained by the end of 2010.

As Scotia Capital economist Aron Gampel points out:

The substantial stimulus injected into the economy from both monetary and fiscal measures is beginning to show more signs that the economy is regaining traction, but the full impact will become more visible in the months ahead.

Contrary to the views of the doom and gloom Liberals, there are more encouraging signs that Canada is leading the recovery with our strong fundamentals intact. Indeed, last week the International Monetary Fund, IMF, forecast that Canada will be the least affected by the global downturn and that our recovery will be the strongest in the G7.

• (1355)

Contrast that with what we are hearing from the Liberal members. We are not hearing these things. They are talking down the Canadian recovery. They are talking down the Canadian economy. For whatever reason, they do not want to see things recover in Canada because they think that hurts their political fortunes. Canadians do not care about the Liberals' political fortunes. What they care about is their families and their jobs. They want Canada to work. They want parties working together provincially and federally. They want municipalities to be engaged. That is what our government is doing. It is not what the Liberal Party supports, by the way.

Nevertheless, Canada and the global economy will continue to be challenged. As noted in the G20 leaders' statement, we have yet to sustain a full private sector supported recovery. Likewise, as IMF managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn conceded recently, even though we are seeing tentative signs of recovery it remains fragile. I quote, "I want to be crystal clear. Until unemployment will decrease, it is difficult to say the crisis is over. It is too early to crow victory".

Without a doubt we are at a critical juncture. If we hope to stabilize our economy and secure this recovery, we must stay the course and stay focused on the economy. Parliamentarians of all stripes can accomplish that, not by throwing Canada into an unnecessary election, but by passing the economic recovery act into law on a timely basis.

The economic recovery act is a complex and multifaceted piece of legislation with many components that have been highlighted by previous speakers.

For the remainder of my allotted time, I would like to focus on the reforms to strengthen the Canada pension plan, or CPP, that are included in the economic recovery act. However, before continuing, I should point out that the CPP is a jointly managed federal-provincial plan. Neither the federal government nor provincial governments can unilaterally alter the CPP.

The reforms laid out in the legislation were unanimously agreed to by federal, provincial and territorial governments this past May as part of a mandated triennial review of the Canada pension plan. Moreover, these reforms were made public at that time, available for all to review.

Before these reforms can take place, they must be officially approved, not only by Parliament, but by two-thirds of the provinces with two-thirds of the population of Canada. Moreover, the approved changes will start to take effect in 2011 and will be gradually implemented with all the changes expected to be in effect fully by 2016.

In short, the reforms agreed to by federal, provincial and territorial governments are intended to modernize the CPP to better reflect the many different paths people take to retirement today.

As Patricia Lovett-Reid, host of *Money Talk*, a popular Canadian personal finance television show and senior vice-president with TD Waterhouse Canada, noted that the CPP reforms speak "to the fact that we are living healthier and longer".

Increased flexibility will be offered through the removal of work cessation tests that require individuals who apply to take their CPP benefit early, i.e., before age 65, to either stop work or reduce their earnings. The economic recovery act will remove the work cessation test in 2012 so that individuals will be able to take their benefit as early as age 60 without any work interruption or reduction in hours worked or earnings. This change will benefit those who would like to take their CPP pension while continuing to work either full or part time and could help individuals to use income from their CPP to phase in retirement or supplement their earnings.

Such a proposed reform has been particularly welcomed, as an *Edmonton Journal* editorial applauding it noted:

—the prospect that thousands will be able to discern a horizon when they can not only choose to be gainfully employed but also collect on a pension they paid into for years must come as some relief...

Older Canadians are healthier than ever and getting even fitter. If they want or need to continue to make a material contribution to the nation's productivity, they mustn't be discouraged.

Increased CPP benefits for a number of Canadians will continue through an increase in general lowering dropout which currently allows for 15% of the years where earnings are low or nil for whatever reason, to be dropped from calculations used to determine an individual's CPP retirement pension amount. The economic recovery act will gradually enhance the retirement pension calculation to allow up to an additional year of low earnings to be dropped from the pension calculation. By 2014, it will allow a maximum of eight years to be dropped.

• (1400)

This will benefit virtually all CPP contributors and improve their basic retirement pensions. It will also increase the average CPP disability and survivor pensions, as a calculation of these benefits would be based on the retirement benefit calculation.

It would be particularly helpful to those whose careers suffer more work interruptions for a variety of reasons like those who pursue post-secondary studies or other educational opportunities, those who reduce their participation in the labour force to provide care to a family member, or those who immigrate to Canada as adults.

Statements by Members

Respected Sun media financial advice columnist Alan Caplan approved this reform noting:

It's intended to smooth out the earnings history for each pensioner who stopped working. The reasons vary, but may include job loss, further education, illness or care giving and child rearing. Almost everyone benefits from the provision.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I must interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary at this point. He will have nine minutes remaining when the House returns to this matter.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

CALGARY NORTHEAST

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my Eid Milan meeting with the Muslim community in Calgary Northeast, the community informed me that the overwhelming majority of the people of Pakistan stand for peace, prosperity, human rights, the rule of law and democracy. I once again publicly wish Pakistani Canadians and our Muslim friends a happy Eid ul-Fitr.

The community also applauded the fact that the Prime Minister attended the meeting of the Friends of Democratic Pakistan with President Obama, Prime Minister Brown and President Zardari.

I also wish to recognize and congratulate Calgary police constables Charanjit Meharu and Kevin Leard in the House today for achieving the life saving award. While responding to a late night domestic assault, through their quick actions they saved the life of a female victim who was no longer breathing.

I call on all sides of the House to commend these heroes and also to work with our Conservative government in placing a priority on the rights of Canadian victims, including victims of domestic violence.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LA FRANCOPHONIE GAMES

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the tremendous success of the Jeux de la Francophonie, which are wrapping up today in Lebanon, and to our many achievements there. The event was an opportunity for athletes from around the world who share the same values and the same language, namely, French, to get together for some friendly competition in the spirit of peace.

Canadian athletes and artists were grouped together on the following teams: Canada; Canada-Quebec; and Canada-New Brunswick. Their achievements have been outstanding. They are returning with gold medals in sporting events such as men's and women's judo and table tennis, discus and decathlon in men's track and field, 4x100-metre relay in women's track and field, as well as in artistic competitions such as stories and storytelling, photography and sculpture. They won over 50 medals and have given us many reasons to be proud.

I would like to offer my most sincere congratulations to all the athletes and artists representing our Canada during these Games, and I wish them every success in their future endeavours.

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NATURAL DISASTERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Southeast Asia has been hard hit in the past few days by a series of weather disasters that have battered the region.

Many countries, including the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and Cambodia, have been struck by typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis or floods that have left behind thousands of victims, including many children.

The major humanitarian NGOs have worked hard in order to help those affected, but their help alone is not enough. Much work lies ahead in order to provide access to food and drinking water, hygiene kits, makeshift shelters, and electricity.

I am calling on the federal government to step up its efforts to help the communities recover quickly from these storms. Like the thousands of Quebecers who have joined forces for this cause and on behalf of all my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I want to tell the victims of these tragic events that they are in my thoughts.

* * *

[*English*]

NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in this honourable House to congratulate Willard Boyle of Halifax, co-winner of this year's Nobel prize in physics.

Mr. Boyle was notified earlier today that he will share the 2009 prize along with two Americans for their work on an imaging semiconductor circuit known as the CCD sensor, the eye of digital cameras and delicate surgical instruments.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences stated that CCD revolutionized photography, as light could now be captured electronically instead of on film. Without this technology, seeing the surface of Mars would not have been a possibility.

I am sure that all members of the House will join me in congratulating Mr. Boyle for this incredible achievement. It is a proud day for Halifax, a proud day for Nova Scotia, and a proud day for Canada.

* * *

● (1405)

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind everyone that October 4 to 10 is Mental Illness Awareness Week.

With nearly one in five Canadians affected, most of us know someone who is struggling and we all need to work hard to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness through education and understanding. There is no health without mental health.

Statements by Members

Tomorrow, here in Ottawa, the seventh annual champions of mental health awards will celebrate the contributions of influential Canadians who have demonstrated extraordinary commitment and leadership in advancing mental illness awareness and mental health policy, research, services or funding in Canada through activities and actions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you to lend your support and encourage each member to take a few minutes to contact the fine folks at their local Canadian Mental Health Association.

For my constituents in Kelowna—Lake Country, a free public forum in the Knowledge is Power Series is being held this Thursday at our local Canadian Mental Health Association office at 504 Sutherland Avenue, from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.

Together we can help each other.

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NOBEL PRIZE IN PHYSICS

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I join my colleague from Halifax in honouring a Canadian who has done us all proud by winning this year's Nobel prize in physics. Willard S. Boyle, born in Amherst, Nova Scotia, will share the prize with two others for his groundbreaking achievements in developing the sensor that is widely used in digital cameras.

Although Mr. Boyle spent many years working in the U.S., he has deep roots in this country, starting in Nova Scotia and then moving to Quebec and Kingston, before making a name for himself at the Bell Labs in New Jersey. It was there that, among his many accomplishments, he and George E. Smith invented the sensor that is being honoured today.

After retiring in 1979, he returned home to Nova Scotia. Mr. Boyle is a great example of a Canadian contributing his unique talents to the world while remaining a proud and patriotic citizen of this country. Congratulations, Mr. Boyle.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, climate change is one of the great threats facing humanity. The IPCC has said that the science is unequivocal and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said that climate change is “the defining challenge of our age”.

Our government has made a strong commitment to reduce Canada's emissions by 20%, from 2006 levels, by 2020, only 10 short years from now. As the global set of climate change talks in Copenhagen approaches, I call on the international community to negotiate in good faith so that a new binding agreement on climate change can be achieved.

The issue is urgent. The time to act is now. The challenge of a warming planet is not only critical for the environment but also a judgment on whether global institutions like the United Nations can act collectively to solve the world's problems.

I ask all to support and encourage our government as it negotiates this new international agreement so that we can achieve change for our children and grandchildren.

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[*Translation*]

CHRISTOPHER GARNEAU

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Corporal Christopher Garneau, of Saint-Constant, who was awarded the medal of excellence by the Chief of Defence Staff, on September 10, for performing his duties with distinction.

Corporal Garneau is a military policeman and a member of the operational mentor and liaison team of the Kandahar provincial reconstruction team. This group is responsible for training Afghan police, strengthening local governance and is also fighting for access to education for the Afghan people.

It is clear to the Bloc Québécois that the Canadian mission in Afghanistan must show concern for the plight of the Afghan people all the while focusing more on humanitarian aid and reconstruction and development efforts. Corporal Garneau is doing just that.

For that reason, on behalf of the citizens of my riding, I congratulate Corporal Christopher Garneau.

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[*English*]

BRITISH COLUMBIA ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this month Ms. Jody Wilson-Raybould was elected regional chief of the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations. She replaces Mr. Shawn Atleo, who was elected to be the national chief of the AFN in July.

Raised in the Comox Valley, Ms. Wilson-Raybould is an elected councillor for the We Wai Kai Nation and is an elected commissioner on the B.C. Treaty Commission. She is a former provincial crown prosecutor with a bachelor of laws from the University of British Columbia and a bachelor of arts in political science and history from the University of Victoria.

She is a very accomplished young woman and all those who know her are very proud of her.

Congratulations, Jody. We all look forward to working with her in her new role.

Statements by Members

● (1410)

[Translation]

SUZANNE BÉLANGER

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to congratulate Suzanne Bélanger, a citizen of my riding of Madawaska—Restigouche, who has been awarded a Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Early Childhood Education.

For over 10 years, Ms. Bélanger has been involved in educating the children under six who live on the Madawaska Maliseet First Nation reserve.

She makes an effort to instill in these children a sense of pride in their roots and in the achievements of their ancestors, while awakening their desire to discover the modern world in which we live.

Ms. Bélanger is well known for her energy, creativity and work ethic. We are fortunate to have someone so passionate caring for and educating this young generation.

On behalf of the citizens of Madawaska—Restigouche, I would like to congratulate and above all thank Ms. Bélanger for her contribution to our communities. We are all very proud of the work she does.

Congratulations, Ms. Bélanger.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister has more than one talent. First and foremost, he is a man of compassion and conviction, a man whose vision centres around the interests of the nation, which makes him a strong leader. We are not like the Liberal Party, which can only think of holding rallies to plunge Canada into an election, purely out of self-interest.

In these tough economic times, others are proposing cuts to government and higher taxes for Quebeckers and Canadians.

Our government is stimulating the economy and working with political, economic and social stakeholders to find solutions. It is important to us that ordinary people have their place in society and that, together, we contribute to our country's success.

To me, that is what we call a strong Quebec within a united Canada. I am proud to pay tribute to the leadership of our Prime Minister.

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[English]

DIWALI

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Diwali, or the festival of lights, is one of the highlights of the year. It represents hope and renewal. It is a time for traditions to be shared with family, friends and community.

During this very special time, the spirit of Diwali provides us with a chance to increase our understanding of one another. We share a country where race, religion, colour and language are not barriers, but reasons for us to celebrate our diversity.

The Indo Canadian community has made phenomenal contributions to Canada from coast to coast to coast, and Diwali is only one of its many gifts to us all.

My community of Burnaby—New Westminster is privileged to enjoy the outstanding contributions of institutions like the Shri Guru Ravidass, the Khalsa Diwan Society (Gurdwara Sahib Sukh Sagar), the Arul Migu Thurkadevi Hindu Society, the Canadian Ramgarhia Society of British Columbia and the Vishva Hindu Parishad of British Columbia.

For all Canadians celebrating Diwali throughout our community of Burnaby—New Westminster, I wish them and their families happiness, prosperity, good health and peace.

Diwali mubarak. Happy Diwali.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not want an election. Constituents of mine, like Brian Patterson from Pottageville, have said that they want the parties to put their differences aside and focus on Canada's economic recovery.

That is what members on this side of the House are doing.

However, the Liberal leader does not care what Canadians think. His party is intent on forcing an unnecessary and opportunistic election. While we are fighting the recession, the Liberal leader wants to fight the recovery.

We will continue to implement Canada's economic action plan. Our plan is working. There are signs of recovery but the situation is still fragile. Our government is committed to staying on course. We remain focused on the economy and helping Canadians.

The Liberal leader can continue to try at every chance to force an election, that is his prerogative, but we will continue to fight the global economic recession.

This is just more proof that the Liberal leader is not in it for Canadians. He is in it for himself.

* * *

[Translation]

4TH ANNUAL SISTERS IN SPIRIT VIGILS

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, dozens of sacred ceremonies, vigils, walks and gatherings were held simultaneously in 65 communities on Sunday. These ceremonies honoured the lives of some 520 aboriginal women who have been murdered or gone missing over the past 30 years.

Sunday's vigils were organized for the fourth consecutive year by the Native Women's Association of Canada. I salute the courage and determination of these women. Violence, whether it is physical, verbal or psychological, is absolutely unacceptable and reprehensible.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I denounce the fact that although the Conservative government has been called upon to take action many times, both nationally and internationally, it has not conducted any investigations or taken any action to give these women the help they need. It is high time that the government do something.

* * *

• (1415)

[English]

LABOUR

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, workers at Vale Inco's Canadian operations have been on strike since July. This labour dispute involves workers in Sudbury and Port Colborne, Ontario, and at the Voisey's Bay mine in Labrador.

The protracted strike has had a serious impact upon the economies of the affected communities, regions and families. It comes at the worst possible time, as Canada faces the most serious recession in decades.

Along with several of my Liberal colleagues, I met striking workers on the picket lines in Sudbury in September. I have also offered my solidarity with Voisey's Bay employees in my own riding. I share their concerns over working conditions and their desire to share in the company's financial success.

In the current economic climate, there can be no better stimulus than to get one of our major industries back in action in Labrador and northern Ontario.

I urge the parties to return to good faith negotiations and to work toward a fair, equitable and speedy resolution of all issues. I ask the Conservative government to show some leadership and support these workers.

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FINANCE MINISTER OF THE YEAR

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is delivering results. Through Canada's economic action plan, we are helping the economy, creating and protecting jobs and safeguarding Canadians during the global recession, and the world is taking notice.

Canadian banks were again named the world's soundest by the World Economic Forum. The International Monetary Fund predicts Canada will lead all G7 countries in economic growth next year.

And now Canada adds another economic award to its trophy case. We are happy to report that *Euromoney* magazine, a worldwide publication considered a leading voice on global financial markets, has named its annual finance minister of the year. No Canadian has ever won this award. That changed today. The finance minister of the

Oral Questions

year is none other than Canada's finance minister, the hon. member for Whitby—Oshawa.

The magazine notes that Canada's finance minister has enhanced his country's reputation for sound fiscal policy. That is something that he and Canadians can be very proud of.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for months, senior economists have been saying that the government's deficit numbers are off the mark by billions of dollars and that we will be in a hole much longer than the Prime Minister is prepared to admit.

These economists assert that the government has led us back into a structural deficit, one that will persist long after the stimulus spending has been exhausted. Yesterday, in this House, the transport minister denied it, so I will ask the Prime Minister: Are we or are we not heading into a structural deficit?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we are not, but I think the House would note that Canada's fiscal situation and the relative strength of our fiscal situation has been praised by experts around the world. In fact, I see today that on behalf of the country and on behalf of the government, Minister Flaherty is accepting an award for fiscal management. I think that is something that all Canadians will be proud of.

The Speaker: I think the Prime Minister was referring to the Minister of Finance and he will know that he must not refer to him by name like that, unless it is someone else he is talking about.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the winner of the brokerage award that year was Lehman Brothers.

[Translation]

What the Prime Minister is saying is that all the country's independent economists are wrong.

I therefore have this question for the Prime Minister: if he is so sure of his figures, why does he not want to give the Parliamentary Budget Officer appropriate funding so that he can conduct an independent assessment of the current status of this country's public finances for Canadians?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is this government that created the office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. He works independently, but as I just said, the Minister of Finance is accepting an award today on behalf of the government for sound fiscal management. That is something the world recognizes. Everyone in Canada should be proud of our fiscal performance.

*Oral Questions**[English]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on another subject, Suaad Mohamud is a Canadian citizen who was wronged and abandoned by her government.

Yesterday, the parliamentary secretary told the House that her case did not reach the political level but that contradicts the Prime Minister's own assertion that he found out about it around August 10. However, email traffic, we found out, makes it clear that as of July 1 media lines were being prepared by the Prime Minister's Office for the Prime Minister himself.

Could the Prime Minister please tell us who is telling the truth—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to deal with the member's comment on the Lehman Brothers. It always pains the Leader of the Opposition to say anything good about this country. Canada has a strong fiscal performance that he and everyone else should recognize, just as the world does.

On the case in question, I have been very clear. There are thousands of consular cases. It is extremely rare for the Prime Minister to become personally involved in a consular case. I did in early August. I asked that Ms. Mohamud be brought back to Canada and she was.

The media asked me for the first time sometime after that. He asked me for the first time today.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians want the Prime Minister to be concerned about Canadians.

Access to information documents tell us that the Prime Minister knew on July 1, not August 18, about Suaad's problems.

The communications director for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, at 8:57 in the morning, in an email marked urgent, said:

[Translation]

"I need lines for the PM right away."

[English]

Seventeen minutes later she repeated, "Lines for the Prime Minister, please".

Is the Prime Minister telling us today that he did not receive this briefing, that he was not paying attention or that he just did not care about Canadians' safety?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister just answered that question from the Leader of the Opposition. He should listen very carefully to what the Prime Minister said.

He said that the Government of Canada receives thousands of consular cases every day. Not every day, but in fact for every one minute there are three requests for assistance and most of these cases do not reach the political level.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Can you believe this, Mr. Speaker? We are talking about a Canadian who was brought to the attention of the Prime Minister but neither he nor the Minister of Foreign Affairs are interested in responding today.

Ms. Hagi spent more than two months at the mercy of the Kenyan courts and yet, according to ATIP documents, members of the Prime Minister's staff were vetting all media lines from as early as June 5. Those same documents confirm a meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, his officials and his staff on July 14.

When they made the decision to let Suaad rot in Kenya, were they acting on their own or were they following the Prime Minister's directions?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this matter is before the courts, I cannot divulge details. The government said that it would undertake a review and a review has been undertaken.

Let me repeat it once again. We get thousands of requests for consular assistance and most of these requests do not reach the political level at all.

* * *

[Translation]

CINAR

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we asked serious questions about the CINAR case to which we received highly unsatisfactory answers. There were many irregularities in the RCMP's initial investigation. Mr. Robinson fought against all odds to shed light on this whole affair, the Bloc Québécois did its part in the House and Mr. Robinson recently won his case. Nonetheless, some questions still remain in all this.

Can the Prime Minister explain why Justice Canada intervened directly to block the RCMP's second investigation?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc is asking me questions about things that happened under the previous government.

These allegations are serious and I encourage him to hand over his information to the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is the type of answer the Prime Minister railed against during the sponsorship scandal.

I am telling him that the current Department of Justice was asked to hand over Mr. Becker's memos. I received a pile of blank pages and not one word.

The Liberal government hid things from us. Why is this government also hiding the truth?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian public does not think I am covering up Liberal scandals.

Oral Questions

The reality is that last week the Leader of the Bloc voted with the Liberals to replace the government. Now he finds that his allies are corrupt. Let him explain that contradiction.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Martin Cauchon, revenue minister at the time, made a big deal about the voluntary disclosures program, which CINAR took advantage of when it signed an agreement with his department. It is difficult to justify calling it voluntary disclosure when CINAR was being denounced publicly and making the front page of the newspapers.

Was it a case of voluntary disclosure or was the leniency shown CINAR more a question of returning a favour to Micheline Charest, a Liberal friend?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, this is a matter that took place completely under the Liberal watch.

We are part of a government that is committed to accountability and transparency. That is why three years ago we set up the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, to handle all prosecutions like this.

I appreciate that, since the Bloc members' interest in justice issues is only about three days old, they would not be aware that that has been in place, but if they have any evidence, they can direct it toward the appropriate individual.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will we then have an answer to the next question?

We have learned that CINAR was fudging the figures and committing fraud to receive tax credits. By lying about the real percentage of its financial participation, CINAR obtained government funding. Another case of white collar crime.

Why are the Conservatives copying the Liberals and refusing to prosecute CINAR and recover the funds obtained fraudulently? Do they, too, have something to hide?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if they have any evidence of Liberal corruption, they should turn it over to the appropriate authority.

However, since they are so interested in fraud, I want them to get up and make sure to indicate that they will be supportive of the new legislation we will be bringing in to crack down on white-collar crime, which will include mandatory sentencing. I wonder if the Bloc members will support that for a change.

* * *

[Translation]

TAX HARMONIZATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, winter is fast approaching. For many families in northern Ontario, this will be the last winter that they will be able to properly heat their homes. Next winter, they will have to pay HST, which will mean an

8% increase in heating costs. Heating bills will reach up to and beyond \$3,000 per household.

How can the Prime Minister justify such an increase in taxes on heating costs for families?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, twice now, this government has lowered the federal GST for Canadians, and twice now, the leader of the NDP and his party have voted against these measures. Our position is to lower taxes, and I hope that we will have the support of this new anti-tax party in the future.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP was opposed to the GST when it was first brought in, and we have opposed the HST for a long time. Other members of the House used to oppose the HST as well. Let me quote from a member who is an economist:

This harmonization of the GST, this tax collusion between provincial and federal governments, is not the way to reverse the economic decline of this country.

Who said that? That is a quote from the Prime Minister during the inaugural debate on the HST.

Why does he now think that this collusion to impose a new tax is a good idea?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, there are conditions under which provinces can opt into an HST. Those conditions are the same for every province. We do not discriminate.

In this government, our position is that sales taxes should be coming down. That is why twice we lowered the GST even though the NDP fought us every step of the way.

If people want to raise the GST back up to 7%, they can vote for the NDP or any of its friends over there, but if they want to keep it at 5%, they can vote for the Conservatives.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not get it. The HST is unfair and it is an 8% increase that is too expensive.

The same is true for the EI premium increase, yet he is planning to increase EI premiums by \$15 billion, which will mean employers will have to pay \$884 more per year per employee, and workers will have to pay an extra \$632 per year. He does not want to call it a tax increase, but that is what it is.

Economist Dale Orr says, "If it quacks like a duck, it's a duck".

Why is the Prime Minister intent on discouraging employers from hiring Canadians in a recession by talking about raising a payroll tax?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): First of all, Mr. Speaker, the government has frozen EI premiums for the next two years. At the same time, over time of course, the EI commission sets EI premiums and it does so in a way that, over the economic cycle, covers the cost of the program.

That is why it is important, when this government brings in help for workers and for the unemployed during a recession, that we bring in help that is temporary and targeted. We do not do things like create a permanent 45-day work year under EI because that would blow premiums through the roof.

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GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have asked the Conservative government repeatedly how much taxpayer money it has spent for its own self-promoting political advertising, but there are still no numbers and still no answers.

My question for the Prime Minister is quite simple today. How much money has the government spent promoting itself to get more votes instead of spending it on H1N1 prevention to save Canadian lives? Was it \$60 million, \$80 million, \$100 million? How much was it?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I answered that question yesterday when I told the member that we do not spend money on self-promotion.

We do spend money on advising Canadians on important issues like H1N1, elder abuse, the home renovation tax credit, and Canadian Forces recruitment.

It is important that Canadians know about what the government is doing in respect of H1N1 so that the country is prepared. I do not understand why the member has a problem with disclosing that kind of information to taxpayers.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government is refusing to give exact numbers. Is that because it does not have them, or because it is hiding something?

Yesterday, the president of the Canadian Medical Association asked this government for an advertising campaign to explain how Canadians can protect themselves from the H1N1 virus.

Instead of spending millions of dollars to win votes with their partisan advertising campaign, can this government spend that money on the well-being, health and lives of Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the question quite clearly. She is asking how much money was spent on self-promotion. The answer is zero.

• (1435)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Treasury Board guidelines require that all Government of Canada communications be objective and inform the public in an accountable and non-partisan way.

I have provided the President of the Treasury Board and the justice minister with a copy of a communication from the Minister of Natural Resources. It appears to seriously violate the Government of Canada policy in many ways.

Would the President of the Treasury Board investigate these apparent serious breaches and make his report public? If he will not, why not?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for providing me with that information ahead of time.

In response to the issue about whether this is objective or not, the letter itself that went to a homeowner here talks about the home renovation tax credit saying:

[It] may make it possible for you to save even more on your home retrofit, as well as on other renovations not eligible under the *ecoENERGY Retrofit—Homes* program. For more information on the *Economic Action Plan* please visit www.actionplan.gc.ca

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my constituent who received this communication from the Minister of Natural Resources is very upset because of this wasteful distribution of Conservative propaganda and because it represents a misuse of his personal information. All he did was apply for a government grant, and now he is being inundated with Conservative Party junk mail, all at taxpayers' expense.

Would the Minister of Justice, who is responsible for the Privacy Act, please investigate this apparent breach and make his report public? If he will not, why not?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the material that was provided to me indicates that we were thanking the particular homeowner for participating in the eco-energy retrofit homes program. In order to help the particular homeowner save even more money, it asks that homeowner to consider the home renovation tax credit. I think that is what every taxpayer wants, especially in a time of recession.

Instead of that member voting against programs that help the ordinary working Canadian, he does that.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services never denied that his government wanted to dip into the employment insurance fund to wipe out the deficit. The Conservatives even wrote in their latest economic update that they planned to take nearly \$19 billion from the EI fund between 2012 and 2015.

Will the minister admit that, like the Liberals before them, the Conservatives are getting ready to eliminate the deficit at the expense of the unemployed?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as hon. members are aware, the Canada Employment Insurance Commission will be an independent body that will make decisions and set the contribution rate according to the benefits that are provided for workers who lose their jobs. We have decided to freeze that contribution rate for this year and next year so that people do not have to pay more during these tough economic times.

We have recently introduced four new measures to help the unemployed. The Bloc Québécois has voted against every one. What do the Bloc members have against the unemployed?

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are coveting the employment insurance fund—that is very clear from the Minister of Finance's economic update—yet they refuse to consider the measures proposed by the Bloc Québécois to eliminate the deficit. They refuse to target bureaucratic spending. They refuse to target tax havens and gifts to big oil. They refuse to tap the wealthy.

Instead of going after the unemployed and the middle class, why does the government not take aim at the right targets to eliminate the deficit?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also noted the Bloc's suggestions. They know that all their suggestions are nothing but hot air, because they will never take power and never be able to implement any of them.

It is easy to look good in front of people, but I am going to come back to the issue of military bases. The member said yesterday at a press conference that he wanted to cut the army's budget. Which military base does he want to close? The one in Bagotville? What does the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord think of that? His colleague wants to close the military base, yet recently he wanted to have all the Chinook helicopters. He is talking out of both sides of his mouth.

• (1440)

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, executives of Abitibi-Bowater in Dolbeau-Mistassini announced to workers that they did not know whether the plant would be able to reopen. The Roberval plant is also closed indefinitely. Two plants, two ministers, same results: nothing is happening.

What is the minister responsible for Saguenay—Lac-St-Jean waiting for to make the employment insurance system more flexible in order to help forestry workers?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to describe what we have done, for the benefit of the people who are watching.

We have introduced four different measures to help people who lose their jobs during the current economic difficulties. We are extending employment insurance by five weeks. They wanted an extra two weeks only. We are adding five, which is helping 289,000

people. They voted against that. We are extending work sharing arrangements by 14 weeks to help companies and employees who want to share their work time. They also voted against that. People who take workforce training for a new job can receive two years of benefits. They voted against that as well.

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PULP AND PAPER INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative government is busy coming up with all kinds of useless advisory committees, mills like Dolbeau-Mistassini are closing, and pulp and paper workers are still losing their jobs. Réjean Paradis, a union representative, condemned the fact that both of the ministers from the region failed to take action while workers were being hit hard on all sides.

When will the government finally offer reasonable loan guarantees so that these Quebec companies can get back on their feet?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that the most important thing now is not to play politics at workers' expense. All the member knows how to do is play politics at workers' expense. Speaking of mill closures, there have been two in his riding. We never heard him say anything about it at the time. The important thing now is to take care of workers—both unionized workers and managers—who have lost their jobs.

Yesterday, we contacted the survival committee to make sure that workers would be getting the help they needed. Dolbeau-Mistassini employees know that we are behind them and will continue to support them. Export Development Canada has spent \$16 billion to support the forestry industry over the past two years, which is something those members will never be able to do.

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[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at health committee Canada's doctors and nurses identified significant gaps in the response to H1N1.

The health and safety of health care workers and clearer consistent advice to all Canadians were at the top of their list. Unfortunately there is an absence of federal leadership. Inconsistent policies and conflicting messages are leaving Canadians and our health care workers both worried and vulnerable.

Will the government listen to Canada's doctors and nurses and immediately fix the gaps they have identified?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we developed a plan back in 2006, which we are implementing with the provinces and territories. We provide weekly briefings to all Canadians on H1N1, and we will continue to do that.

The chief medical officers of the provinces and territories, which are responsible for the delivery of health care, continue to do the same thing in their jurisdictions, .

Oral Questions

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the United States became the third country to begin pandemic vaccine immunization. China started on September 21 and Australia began last week. However, nothing will start in Canada for another six weeks at least.

Why is the Minister of Health leaving Canadians vulnerable in the face of H1N1?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not delaying the vaccine. As the Chief Public Health Officer of our country has stated time and time again to Canadians, the vaccine will be widely available to all Canadians during the first week of November.

We are on schedule. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories to implement the rollout of the vaccine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every time the Minister of Health answers a question about the H1N1 virus, people get more and more confused and uncertain. A recent Canadian study found that people who had received a seasonal flu shot were two times more likely to contract the H1N1 virus.

What is the minister doing to reassure people? Should Canadians get both vaccines, and if so, which one should they get first?

• (1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only individual creating uncertainty is that individual. We have been very clear to all Canadians in regard to the rollout of the H1N1 vaccine.

The Chief Public Health Officer has also stated many times to Canadians, on a weekly basis, that the safety of all Canadians is most important.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, B.C. is at the centre of the second wave of H1N1, but the Conservatives have failed to have vaccines ready in time.

We know that front line doctors and nurses have little confidence in the Conservatives' pandemic plan. Their plan does not even provide for protective masks for nurses, who are rightly worried that their safety will be at risk.

If our nurses, who are our first line of defence for sick Canadians, fall ill, how can Canadians expect to be safe from H1N1?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal government, there was no plan. In 2006 we developed a pandemic plan and we are implementing that. We are working with the provinces and territories.

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INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the devastation in Indonesia and Samoa has claimed over 660 lives so far. The initial outbreak that struck Indonesia triggered landslides and wiped out at least four villages across the western coast. Estimates put the total number of homes destroyed at over 10,000. In

Samoa some 20 villages have been wiped out, leaving over 3,000 homeless.

Could the Minister of International Cooperation tell the House what Canada is doing to help these poor victims?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government wishes to extend its sympathies to those affected by the typhoons, earthquake and tsunami that have hit the South Pacific region recently.

In response to preliminary appeals today, I am announcing support for the victims of the recent earthquake, with \$300,000 for those in Samoa and \$500,000 for those in Indonesia. These funds will help organizations such as the Red Cross, the World Food Programme and UNICEF provide the needed humanitarian services and goods.

This \$800,000 announcement is in addition to the \$5 million announced last week to help those affected by typhoons.

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AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from gagging witnesses to delay tactics and even to the forced exit of the respected chair of the commission hearings, the government continues to undermine the investigation on Afghan prisoner abuse. This behaviour is not about national security concerns. This is about government embarrassment.

There are allegations that the Kandahar governor at the time, Asadullah Khalid, was himself involved in the torture of detainees and that Canada knew. Is this why the government is embarrassed? Is this why the minister is interfering in the hearings?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member can rant and roar and put all kinds of misinformation on the floor of the House of Commons.

The reality is the commissioner's chair, Peter Tinsley, has come to the natural end of his four-year term. He will not be re-appointed. I am sure we will receive a deep and wide applicant pool to choose from in a fair, open and transparent process to replace the chair. Clearly we have able people now serving on that commission who will continue the important work.

I wish the hon. member, who is a serving member of the bar, would respect this process, let this commission proceed with its work and not splash acid on the people who are trying to get to the bottom of this investigation.

Oral Questions

●(1450)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian soldiers are highly trained professionals who are respected around the world and Canadians are right to be proud of them. Yet by delaying these hearings and undermining the investigation into serious allegations of prisoner abuse, the government is doing our soldiers and their sacrifice a great disservice.

We need to know what happened to clear the air of these allegations. Anything less will only continue to undermine the morale of our troops. Canadians deserve answers and our soldiers deserve answers.

When will the minister stop throwing up roadblocks and let this inquiry complete its work?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing. The commission is proceeding with its important work. We have provided thousands of documents and we have co-operated with witnesses within the mandate of the commission, which was recently affirmed by the Federal Court.

The hon. member can continue to do exactly what he is accusing the government of doing, and that is undermining this commission by putting spurious allegations without a scintilla of evidence before the House. He will continue to undermine the very commission that he pretends to protect.

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[Translation]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the government refuses to do anything to help the Quebec forestry industry, it does not hesitate to subsidize an ethanol plant in Ontario that belongs to Suncor Energy, the Alberta oil company that rakes in billions of dollars in profits every year.

Can the minister explain to us how she managed to find \$110 million for a single oil company, and yet has nothing to offer Quebec forestry workers?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that this government has been working on the forestry issue in Canada for a very long period of time, starting in 2007 with the community development trust which was \$1 billion, following up with marketing and innovation that is helping forestry companies all across Canada deal with the natural economic downturn that has happened since the collapse of the U.S. housing market.

This government has stood by the forestry industry, is there for workers, is there for communities, and will continue to do so.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the minister realize that by subsidizing big oil, she is asking Quebecers to reward those companies that pollute, and hitting us in the wallet every time we fill up at the pump?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing in Canada is true. We are blessed with many natural resources. As part of the portfolio, we have different sectors with which to deal. As has been pointed out, we have paid attention to forestry very carefully because of the economic downturn.

As well, it is important to look to oil and gas as it is an economic fundamental in our country, which has many jobs associated with it, from the east coast of Canada to the west coast of Canada and into the north as well.

Finally, we look to renewable energy as an incredibly important part of our future, putting \$3.7 billion into that resource since 2007.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members opposite either do not understand the issue or they choose to ignore it. Sisters, mothers, daughters, aunts and nieces are all going missing.

Yesterday, at the Amnesty International symposium, participants heard that one aboriginal woman goes missing each week in our country. This is a national crisis.

Why is the government not hearing their calls for action? Why will it not respond by immediately launching a proper public investigation?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Sisters in Spirit is a multi-research project. It is a five year project of which the member is very well aware. It is a project that is aimed at identifying and quantifying the actual number of murdered and missing aboriginal women. It is also a public awareness campaign. It is in its fifth year and is not completed as of yet, but it is because of the incredible work of NWAC and the families and the victims and their courage that we have been able to identify the root causes of racialized and sexualized violence.

We continue to work with NWAC to find better solutions to deal with this overwhelming problem.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba the government has shown leadership on missing and murdered aboriginal women. Like us, it recognizes that Sisters in Spirit is an important initiative, but also knows it is not enough. Manitoba recognizes the need for a real comprehensive national strategy to address this matter.

Will the Minister of Justice tell the House why his government does not recognize that a full public national investigation is needed immediately?

Oral Questions

• (1455)

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Sisters in Spirit is also aimed at identifying the measures to increase the safety of aboriginal women and girls. In addition to identifying the number of missing and murdered aboriginal women, it is also working to raise public awareness. I am sure the member would agree that this project has been extremely successful in raising awareness to the issue of violence against aboriginal women and girls.

It is a research project that is guided by four very important questions, which were highlighted today by the president of NWAC. Questions that the member raises often in the House are already being addressed through the great research project.

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HEALTH

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the Minister of Health really appreciates just how concerned Canadians are in the face of such confusing, conflicting advice and information. The best thing the Minister of Health could do today is to tell us how she responds to those scientists who have said, very clearly, that the vaccine to be safely tested and available for all Canadians will take until at least late in November to the beginning of December. That is totally in contradiction to what the minister is saying.

Could she clarify how a safe vaccine will be available in—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the stories are false. The vaccine will be safe. The Chief Public Health Officer has stated that the vaccine will be widely available the first week of November. We are on schedule.

We will continue to rely on the medical experts' advice and work with the provinces and territories to implement the rollout of the vaccine.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the minister would suggest experts like Dr. Joanne Langley of Dalhousie University and Dr. Neil Rau, an infectious disease expert, are wrong and that she is right. What Canadians would hope is that she would stop this mantra of "trust us, don't worry, be happy", start to clear up the confusion that is out there and come clean with Canadians.

The best thing she could do is tell Canadians that she is calling for a meeting in her office today of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, the Canadian Nurses Association, the Canadian Medical Association and the College of Family Physicians of Canada. She could do that today and clear up—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, the stories are false. We rely on the Chief Public Health Officer of our country and the medical experts for their advice in the development of the vaccine.

I can assure all Canadians that the vaccine we produce for them will be safe and effective.

FINANCE

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 1982, *Euromoney* magazine, an international business publication, considered a leading voice on global financial markets, annually names just one finance minister in the world as the Finance Minister of the Year. Past winners include a treasury secretary of the U.S. and the current OECD Secretary-General. No Canadian has ever won this prestigious global award.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance please inform the House who was just named Finance Minister of the Year?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has the floor. We will have some order.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I know everyone is excited. However, we do need to remind Canadians that it is under the leadership of this Prime Minister and the leadership of this finance minister in implementing the Canadian economic action plan that the world has come to notice us. Canadians know that. They envy us. And now the rest of the world has noticed.

In fact, *Euromoney* magazine heralded our finance minister for enhancing our reputation for sound fiscal policy that takes full account of social justice in keeping the financial sector out of—

• (1500)

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fisheries minister continues to insist that custodial management of the entire Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap now mysteriously belongs to Canada. Yet, European factory freezer trawlers continue to plunder Canadian cod stocks inside Canada's supposed new territory. It was NAFO, however, not Canada, that resumed fishing of cod on the Flemish Cap this year after 10 years of closure and it was NAFO that set these irresponsible quotas beyond the scientifically recommended amounts.

Why did the minister simply not use her new-found powers of custodial management to stop this foreign fishing activity inside the Canadian management zone? Why not? Because it does not exist. It is a—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Points of Order

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all decisions at this year's NAFO meeting were made within scientific advice and with the full participation of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to remind the hon. member that according to the Newfoundland industry the decisions taken at NAFO will put an additional \$11 million into the Newfoundland economy. I do not know why an MP from Newfoundland would not support coastal Newfoundland fishers.

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[Translation]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, federal assistance to students in the rest of Canada has not improved access to post-secondary education nor curbed debt. For its part, Quebec decided to put in place a student aid system based on need. The federal government insists on imposing its new grant program on Quebec, which is asking for the right to opt out with full compensation and no strings attached.

Why is the government refusing to allow Quebec to opt out and better assist the poorest students?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong.

[English]

The facts are that we have indeed made it much easier for students to be able to afford to go to college and university to further their education. We have replaced the Canada millennium scholarship fund with a new series of grants that will provide more than 100,000 more students with monthly support, particularly if they are from lower and middle income classes.

We have also made it easier for them to repay their debt and to have that debt forgiven if they indeed cannot find employment that will support them. We are working to help students get the education they need.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than 500 aboriginal women have gone missing in Canada, most of them presumed murdered or kidnapped. Highway 16, the so-called “highway of tears”, cuts through my riding. The families of the victims have been forced to endure not only their loss but the indifference of their governments.

Recently, vigils were held across the country to remember the victims and to demand that the Conservative government create a national plan of action.

For a Prime Minister who believes that colonialism only happened in other countries, will he finally do what these desperate families need: a real plan to end violence against aboriginal women in Canada?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this would be a good opportunity for the

member to take a moment to read the most recent report from Sisters in Spirit and familiarize himself as to what the research project is all about.

At this moment, I would like to congratulate the victims' families for the incredible work that they have done. They are a significant part of this research project to identify policy initiatives and ways that we can increase the safety of aboriginal women and girls.

It has been a very difficult time for them, but we appreciate the incredible work that they have done.

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HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been inundated with calls from my constituents who are adamantly opposed to Bill C-428, which was introduced by the Liberal member for Brampton—Springdale and seconded by the member for Toronto Centre. The bill would allow people to receive old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits after only being in the country for three years.

Would the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development please tell this House the position of our Conservative government regarding Bill C-428?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. Our Conservative government does not support this bill.

Our old age security system is designed to strike a proper balance between the contributions that individuals make to our economy and our society, and on the other hand the publicly paid for benefits that they would receive in their old age.

The hon. member's bill would cost over \$700 million in additional funds. Like most Liberal proposals, it is financially irresponsible. We will not support it.

* * *

● (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, prior to question period I had provided a copy of a letter to the Minister of Justice and the President of the Treasury Board.

During question period, the President of the Treasury Board commented on this letter and dismissed some of the points that I had raised, that they were not in fact in compliance with Treasury Board guidelines.

I would seek unanimous consent of the House to table the letter, so that all hon. members could see the breaches of the Treasury Board guidelines with regard to this communication.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Mississauga South have the unanimous consent of the House to table this letter?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Government Orders

The Speaker: There is no consent.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT (STIMULUS)

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Before question period, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage had the floor. There are nine minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

I therefore call upon the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure once again to rise and speak to Canada's economic recovery legislation.

Members may recall that just before the break I was talking about important provisions to improve the Canada pension plan. As I said earlier, the Liberals have already indicated that they are going to vote against this. If they do not support improvements to the CPP, just going along with their direction in question period, if not, why not? Who could stand against improvements to the CPP? These recommended reforms are incredibly important.

Mr. Finn Poschmann, a significant individual from the C.D. Howe Institute, has given these adjustments high marks. He said:

The proposed adjustments mark an important sea change in government pension policy approach to dealing with population aging and, in particular, making it easier for those people who want to work later in life to do so.

TD Bank's chief economist, Don Drummond, also said that this is a "positive development as it provides further options for Canadians in the tail end of their working careers".

These are the things people are saying about the reforms to CPP that our government has brought forward. These reforms are in our economic recovery legislation. This is what Bill C-51 is about.

The Liberal Party has indicated that it is not too concerned with economic recovery. The Liberals are not too concerned with supporting Bill C-51 because they are more concerned about forcing an election that nobody wants. That is reprehensible.

I am quite surprised with the number of things the Liberal Party has voted against. The Liberals voted last week against the implementation of the home renovation tax credit. Thousands of Canadians from coast to coast—

An hon. member: Hundreds of thousands.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, my colleague corrects me that it is hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have taken advantage of the home renovation tax credit. That is providing jobs in Canada's forestry sector and is supporting the construction industry at a time when it is needed. People are reinvesting in their

homes because of this stimulus. The Liberal Party voted against it. Who could vote against this? It is unbelievable. The Liberals are voting against things that only a number of months ago they supported.

Post-secondary education leaders from Ontario's community colleges were here last week. The president of Sault College said to our finance minister, the G7 economic leader award winner as indicated in question period and the best of the best according to *Euromoney* magazine, that this is the first money the college has received in decades for upgrades. Furthermore, he said that the morale at Sault College could not be higher. It has broken ground. It is creating jobs. Sault College is being improved. These improvements will lead to a better educated workforce and a stronger Sault Ste. Marie.

That is what we are doing. This is all part of Canada's economic recovery plan. Who could stand against Canada's economic recovery? The Liberal Party could stand against economic recovery. While we are fighting the recession, the Liberals are fighting the recovery.

I can say with clarity that there is nobody in my home riding of Peterborough who does not want economic recovery. There is nobody who does not want pension certainty. The reforms to the Canada pension plan that I mentioned are things the people in Peterborough want.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Do they want an election?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, they do not want the bill on OAS put forward by the Liberal member for Brampton—Springdale and they do not want an election.

The measures in Canada's economic recovery bill are important. We have broken ground on so many public investments over the last number of months and we are going to break ground on many more.

We have been working in partnership with the provinces and municipalities at a time when Canadians are demanding that their representatives work together in their interests, not in politicians' interests. At a time when Canadians are asking us to work for them, the Liberal leader is saying, "It's about me". That is wrong. It is the wrong time for that type of thing to be happening.

● (1510)

When I go out and meet with Canadians, not just in my riding but broadly, they say to stay the course.

We are working together. We are working to build a Canada that is better, safer and stronger. We are taking these economic head winds head on. They are rising to the challenge once again, as Canadians always do when they face adversity. Canadians are meeting the challenge. They are saying to the Liberal Party to get behind the recovery. The Liberals are missing the message: get behind the recovery. They should not stand in the way of Canada's economic action plan.

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Daily we hear the Liberal Party say that the government is promoting itself. No, we are not. We are working for Canadians. When we tell people about the home renovation tax credit, that is to make sure that people know they can take advantage of the tax credits that are available to them. When we tell them about Canada's economic action plan, we are making sure they know the measures the government has put in place during this difficult time to rebuild the Canadian economy. This type of awareness is critical. It is critical for consumer confidence.

I come from small business. The driver in small business is consumer confidence. There are a lot of factors that come into play, but frankly when consumers are confident that things are good or that things will get better, they will spend money. They will invest. They will invest in their homes. They will invest in cars. They will invest in so many of the things that drive our economy.

That is why the government has a role in making sure that Canadians know that we are working, that we are focused on the situation and that we have a plan that will make it better. As I said earlier, that plan is getting international recognition. That plan is going to do Canada well in the future. That plan is going to put Canada in a position where we come out of this economic recession stronger than when we went into it.

That is what the IMF said last week, was it not, Mr. Speaker? I am sure the Speaker follows everything in the news, just as many good representatives do. He would have seen last week when the IMF specifically indicated that Canada will lead the G7 out of this economic recession, that we were the last to go in and we will be the first to come out. We will lead the G7 in economic recovery.

That is exciting because that is what we have been fighting for in this chamber. On this side of the House that is what we have been fighting for. That is what we have been working for. That is what we believe in.

We are determined to get Canada through this in a better position than any nation we compete with. That is our commitment. That is why we must focus on the economy. We must focus on the economic recovery bill that is before the House and people should not be looking for an opportunity to bring the House down just because they think the opportunity is there to do so.

The Liberal leader spoke last week, I believe, at the Economic Club of Toronto. We looked for some kind of alternative plan since he is trying to bring the government down, some kind of alternative or credible economic plan. What we saw was a dusting off of the 1993 red book, billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars of new spending promises and no idea of how we would pay for them, but apparently he is not going to raise taxes. If he is on one side saying we have to do everything we can to get rid of a deficit and on the other side saying we are going to spend billions and billions and billions of dollars and in the middle is saying that we have creative accountants that will be able to do that without raising taxes, forgive me but just about everyone in the country knows that is not on. Certainly the people in the electric city of Peterborough, Ontario know that.

● (1515)

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague had some interesting comments to say about

an earlier tax freedom day for Canadians. We notice he did not say anything about tax freedom day for corporations because he would not want it to interfere with New Year's Day celebrations.

I would like to ask the member a question about small business. He talked about recovery. If he were to follow the NDP plan to reduce small business taxes to zero, in other words move some of those large corporate tax breaks for those most profitable corporations in Canada over to small business, which I am sure the hon. member would agree is the engine for growth in this country, I am wondering if that is something he might consider.

He talked about bolstering the CPP and recovery. It seems to me that helping small business would be a perfect way to help with this recovery.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, although I am of a diminutive age, I do understand that big business is very important to Canada's overall economic strength. I look at my own riding where there are companies like General Electric, which the member would like to tax at a higher level, and Quaker Oats, which the member would like to tax at a higher level. They both employ several thousand CAW workers. By reducing their taxes, we are making them more competitive so the workers can continue to hold those jobs.

I would like to point to a very significant company that recently returned to Canada, which had expanded abroad and moved its corporate head office. It is called Tim Hortons. It came back to Canada because we have put Canada on a competitive footing so that we can compete for business investment.

These large corporate entities employ hundreds of thousands of Canadians and further drive the small business economy in this country. Small entrepreneurs cannot do it on their own. They need investment. We need global investment in this country. That is what will make Canada stronger.

● (1520)

Mr. John Rafferty: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the hon. member used the Tim Hortons card. It always comes out.

I just want to change my tack a little bit. We have businesses in my riding. In particular, the member may have heard of the Persian Man. Of course Thunder Bay is very famous for Persians, in direct competition with the company he just mentioned. The government's support of HST in Ontario will cause hardship for many, many small businesses and for the consumers in my riding.

The hon. member talked about recovery, which in his books really means consumer purchasing, I wonder how he thinks the HST will help that.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I took a lot of economics courses at university, on top of finance, accounting and a couple of political science courses, and I would like to go back to the professors and tell them how politics really works. That said, one of the things I did study was economics.

One of the problems with a PST, the way it is currently administered, is the cascading effect of taxes. It becomes a surtax on business, because when businesses buy inputs, they have to pay tax on them. It discourages investments in Canadian business.

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I will not get into the politics of the HST. I will say though that Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty was the gentleman who made the decision. He is the leader of the government in Ontario. He made the decision in Ontario, as did Premier Gordon Campbell in British Columbia. Nobody is forcing them to move toward an HST.

That said, be under no illusion, they are reducing the input tax into investment into Canadian jobs. That is why they did it, to make Canada more competitive, not less competitive.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that the Conservative side is promoting heavily the HST in British Columbia. Conservatives should know that during the recent provincial campaign, the B.C. Liberals actually said that they would not implement the HST. British Columbians are outraged, quite justifiably, because they were essentially told an untruth. They were told that the HST would not be brought in and then the B.C. Liberals, right after the election, have turned right around and are starting to impose it.

The average British Columbian will pay \$500 more. Everything from babies' diapers, to funerals, to haircuts will cost more because of this deal with the devil, what we call the Campbell and the name of the Prime Minister, which I cannot use in this House, HST. Most British Columbians fundamentally reject that. In fact, in New Westminster—Coquitlam, which is undergoing a byelection now, the reaction from the public has been very strong against the HST.

I would like to ask the hon. member, will the Conservatives admit that it was a fundamental untruth in the provincial election campaign to say that there would be no HST? Then the provincial government, working with the federal Conservatives, turned around and imposed something that will cost the average British Columbian \$500. Will he admit that was wrong and will he apologize?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I have never run in a B.C. election campaign, which is good for the NDP because I am a real campaigner.

I must say that when it comes to the HST, this was a decision made by the B.C. government. If people in B.C. have concerns or questions about it, they should talk to their government about it.

Every time we have reduced taxes in this country, members of the NDP have stood against it. They have stood against reductions in the GST, not once but twice. They have stood in opposition to reducing taxes for seniors. Who could oppose tax reductions for seniors? When we removed over 800,000 low income Canadians, predominantly seniors, from the tax rolls permanently, members of the NDP took pride in saying that they voted against it. They personally called for reductions in the GST. It was their party's position. However, when they had a chance to vote in favour of reducing the GST, not once but twice they voted in favour of the GST remaining at 7%.

Canadians want a 5% GST, which is why the NDP is so wrong. For members of the NDP to stand up now and say that they are tax fighters, nobody believes them. They have no credibility on this. There is not a tax the NDP would not raise in any category. Higher taxes make a happier NDP. That is the way it is.

Canadians can count our party to maintain taxes at the lowest possible rate. Tax freedom day is 20 days earlier in Canada under

this government. Under the NDP, I do not think we would ever get out from under taxes.

• (1525)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is being a bit disingenuous when he talks about the fact that the NDP voted against the GST. He fails to tell Canadians that it was in the context of a budget bill that stripped the rights for women to file complaints against the Canadian Human Rights Commission on women's equality, it stripped away environmental protection under the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and on and on. He has not actually put it into the appropriate context.

I need come back to what is happening in British Columbia with the HST. The member says that it is entirely up to the provinces. I wonder how he would characterize the amount of money that was on page 166 of the budget that was an inducement to the provinces to put in place the HST that the finance minister has had on his agenda now for any number of years.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, in budget 2006, I do not remember any of the measures that the member discussed when it came to voting for a lower GST. In fact, if she checks her records she will find that what she just said is absolutely incorrect.

Members of the NDP had a chance to vote against the lower GST and they did not take it. They had a chance to vote against lower taxes for seniors and they did not take it. They had a chance to vote against lower taxes for small business and they did not take it. They had a chance to vote against corporate surtaxes and they did not take it. They had a chance to vote against lower corporate taxes and they did not take it.

They did not take any chances to reduce the tax burden on Canadians in this country. That is why nobody believes them when they stand up and say that they are outraged about a tax. They love taxes.

The NDP is all about big government and big spending because that is what it believes in. It has zero credibility when it comes to taxes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to address Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures.

In the few minutes I have to speak, I will try to outline the interests of the various political parties regarding this budget matter, for the benefit of those watching us. The Bloc Québécois, true to its commitment to defend the interests and values of Quebecers, rises every day in this House in order to do so. I am proud of this, because it allows us to properly assess every bill, motion and budget or budgetary measure brought forward by the government or the opposition parties, in the interest of Quebecers.

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I would like to go over the measures proposed by the Conservative Party in Bill C-51, along with their context. Indeed, since Parliament resumed, all of the decisions made by the political parties of this House, apart from the Bloc Québécois, have been made based on the possibility of an election. Understandably, the members of a party like the Bloc Québécois, who choose to vote every day in the interest of Quebeckers, do not have to worry about saving their seats. We are here to defend the values and interests of Quebeckers. That is what differentiates us from the other parties of this House.

Bill C-51 has been introduced by the Conservatives. Again, as soon as the House resumed in September, the Conservatives had to prove to the rest of Canada, in case there was a federal election, that they do not always introduce unpopular measures. Therefore they decided to introduce Bill C-51. That makes sense when your only objective is to get as many votes as possible, which is what the Conservatives want. In light of an impending election, they decided to introduce a bill to implement what they had already announced in the budget. Analysts were not fooled by this either. Some of these measures did not require a bill in order to be implemented. The government could have handled that itself. This bill is a purely partisan and political tactic.

Bill C-51 proposes the implementation of the renovation tax credit. This is clearly a measure inspired by proposals in both of the Bloc Québécois' stimulus plans. Again, we were the only responsible party that, before each of the government's budgets or budgetary announcements, always submitted proposals, requests and plans to deal with this crisis. The Bloc Québécois has always been responsible and has always worked hard. This week we proposed measures to achieve a balanced budget. Yesterday, our party proposed measures to eliminate the huge deficit the Conservative government is racking up. Other speakers will have a chance to have their say on this in the House.

We proposed these measures during a press conference because we are responsible and because we are probably the most informed party around, and we always represent the interests of Quebeckers. We were the ones who asked for the home renovation tax credit. In the words of the leader of the Bloc Québécois, it would be foolish of us not to vote in favour of the very measures that we proposed.

The second measure is a first time homebuyers' tax credit. In its last platform, the Bloc Québécois proposed a first time homebuyer's tax credit. We did so because Quebec has had programs to support first time homebuyers and they were very popular. They helped Quebec recover from, not this crisis, but the recession in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Bloc Québécois saw the crisis coming. You will remember that the Leader of the Bloc was the only candidate in the 2008 election campaign to predict a recession and to state that something had to be done immediately.

• (1530)

The first time homebuyers' tax credit was in our election platform. The government decided to implement it. Once again, in the words of the Leader of the Bloc Québécois, it would be foolish to vote against it.

Bill C-51 will also implement Canada's international commitments to the IMF, which were signed in 2008. This agreement has already been signed. It makes sense to ratify it and to have legislation to be able to implement these provisions.

The fourth measure is amending the Canada pension plan. Quebec is excluded as it has its own pension plan. These amendments are based on consultations with the provinces concerned, excluding Quebec. Once again, Quebec continues to be a leader in many, and I would say the majority, of Canada's assistance programs. Quebec is always the leader. We solved the pension problem a long time ago. Once again, we cannot oppose a measure discussed by the other Canadian provinces. For those who accuse us of always opposing what is happening in Canada, we say that if it is a good thing for Canadians, then good for them. We cannot oppose that. Especially since Quebec already has its own plan. No problem there.

The fifth measure will act on the findings of a joint expert panel made up of representatives of Nova Scotia and the federal government to resolve litigation between the parties that has been outstanding since 1984. That obviously affects Nova Scotia. Good for them. They seem pleased. The members from Nova Scotia seem pleased with this measure. We cannot oppose this measure.

That is why we will support Bill C-51. However, I will repeat that this bill was introduced by the Conservatives for purely partisan reasons, because there was a serious chance of an election. They wanted to show Canadians that they had proposed interesting measures in their last budget. But this bill only covers some of them. It only implements part of what they proposed in their last budget, which we were completely against.

I am bringing up our position, because I am trying to understand the Liberals' position. The Liberals supported the last budget, and these measures were part of the last budget. They decided that they were against Bill C-51, again, for purely partisan reasons.

The Liberals did not think about the interests of Canadians and even less about the interests of Quebeckers. After their caucus meeting this summer, they decided that they would no longer support the government. No matter what happened, no matter what the government introduced, good or bad, the Liberals decided they would be against it. We see how that turned out for them. They are in the process of self-destructing. That is a very Liberal way of doing things. They had already started to self-destruct with the sponsorship scandal, and nothing has changed. It is going well. In any case, it is fun to watch. But it is not fun for democracy when there are political parties and members in this House that represent their constituents and think only about protecting their seat.

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That is what the Conservatives were doing with this measure. The Liberal strategy has been to bring down the government at all costs. They should have thought about this a little more carefully. The political parties each have their own way of doing things, their own pollsters, analysts and focus groups. It is all very complicated now. I have the good fortune of being the Bloc's chief organizer in Quebec, and I must say, engaging in politics has become a real science. In that regard, the leader of the Liberal Party will definitely not pass the test. He may have studied at Harvard, but he did not study politics. That is politics 101. The way things are done on the ground, he definitely has not done that. Nevertheless, the Liberals have decided to vote against Bill C-51.

As I have already said, they voted for the budget and these measures represent the best parts of the budget that was passed. It is impossible to understand the Liberals. They do not understand themselves, and that is a serious problem.

As for the members of the NDP, they opposed the budget. They have now decided to support this measure, probably for the same reasons we did. That is fine for them, except that they changed their minds because they decided to support this government at all costs, since opposing the budget. Once again, it is only to serve their own personal interests, since they realize they probably would not have too many seats left if an election were called. Naturally, they are doing everything they can to save their own skin.

• (1535)

So they decided to support all of the Conservatives' proposed measures. I can understand why they would support this one because it is the best one.

The employment insurance measure, however, is terrible. I was here, waiting patiently. People know that I am often in the House of Commons. The Conservatives were at least honest about the bill to amend employment insurance, whose goal is clearly to help Ontario's auto sector. Of that there can be no doubt. What the people from Ontario said was right. They defended the auto sector.

Let us review the measure in the new employment insurance bill. Long-tenured workers who have not collected more than 35 weeks of employment insurance benefits over the past five years will get 15 to 20 weeks of extra benefits. That is the new measure. The forestry sector will obviously not be covered by this measure, which will only help people in industries that were doing well before the crisis. That does not include the forestry sector, which has been in crisis for five years now. The Conservatives have abandoned forestry workers to their crisis and their misery. They chose to invest their money in the auto sector instead.

The NDP may have decided to forget about Quebec and the Maritimes and concentrate on Ontario by supporting this employment insurance bill. Not only are they supporting it, but worse still, they plan to support all government measures until this bill goes through, which will probably be in the spring. The NDP will most likely try to stretch out the process for this bill until the next budget is introduced.

That is how the other parties play politics, but that is not how the Bloc Québécois does things. We have always been very respectful of the voters. We stay in touch with our constituents every day. We

know that if the Conservatives had put as much effort into helping the forestry industry, which has been in crisis for five years, as they have into helping the auto sector, the forestry industry crisis would be a thing of the past and the sector would now be supporting the entire Canadian economy.

The Conservatives probably did not concern themselves with that because the bulk of the industry is in Quebec. It is a political choice.

However, it is hard to watch Conservative members from Quebec day after day staunchly defend the Conservative Party plan. They stand up and defend the plan. The last report tabled by the government shows that \$9.6 billion was spent in the automobile sector, while \$70 million was promised to the forestry sector, of which \$57 million was spent. They are all pleased. They applaud all that like good soldiers. It is easy to see why their numbers will not go up in the next election. They wonder why. They need only to look in the mirror to understand that they are not defending the interests of Quebecers in the House. They are defending Canadian interests, as they like to say.

Nonetheless, they forget that the forestry industry existed long before the oil industry. They are denying their own origins. It is true: the forestry sector built the Canada of today, starting with Quebec. Those Quebecers never hesitate to deny their origins. It is quite extraordinary, but there you have it. It was one of our ancestors who opened the door to the English on the Plains of Abraham. That is a daily occurrence these days. It is hard to watch Quebecers from other political parties put their personal interests above the collective interest.

I think it is quite honourable of the Quebecers in the Bloc Québécois to never hesitate, day after day, to put their seat on the line. They do not do so for their own interests, but for the interests of Quebecers. It is so simple and it confounds the political experts: why is the Bloc Québécois so popular in Quebec? Because it is the only party that does not deny its origins. We try, day after day, to defend the interests of Quebecers. We are transparent. You can read us like a book. Our leader, Gilles Duceppe, is doing an excellent job. He never hesitates to stand before any crowd, anywhere in Quebec, and even in the rest of Canada—

• (1540)

The Deputy Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member. We do not use proper names, but riding names or titles.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry.

The Leader of the Bloc Québécois is always willing to appear at events and gatherings, where he is received with all the respect Quebecers owe him as a man of integrity who defends them day after day.

Clearly, it is to the advantage of Quebec, the Bloc Québécois and all Quebecers to have a leader with a team of members, men and women who come into this House every day not to defend their own interests or the salary they make, but to defend the interests of their constituents.

It is sad that there are Quebeckers in the other three political parties in this House who think only of their own interests, with no thought to the interests of their constituents and their fellow Quebeckers. It is sad, but it is a fact. One day, history will catch up to all the parties, because these successive minority governments will be analyzed. In my opinion, we have not seen the last of minority governments.

Last week, we were looking at the situation in Germany, the most powerful economy in Europe, which once again elected as chancellor a party leader who will have to forge alliances in order to be able to govern. Canada is lagging behind once again because too many members of this House think only of themselves and never spare a thought for their constituents. That is the reality.

Bill C-51 contains two measures that are important to the Bloc Québécois. These measures were among our demands when we presented our recovery plans to the government. Moreover, the Minister of Finance congratulated us and told us that we were the only party in Ottawa that dared to table its plan. He even rose in the House to call on the other parties to follow the Bloc's example. We had called for a renovation tax credit, and our most recent election platform included a tax credit for first-time home buyers. Obviously, we are pleased that these measures are included in Bill C-51.

As the leader of the Bloc Québécois said, we are not foolish, and when we ask for something, we are prepared to support it. When we do not like something, and when Quebeckers do not like something, we will not support it, and we will never hesitate to vote against a budget like the last one, which was not in the interests of Quebeckers, quite simply because it focused on the automotive industry and ignored the forestry industry. It was the same story when the Conservatives introduced the last bill on EI reform, which focused on the automotive industry, and did absolutely nothing to help the forestry sector and part of the Quebec economy.

When the government talks about full-time workers and has the audacity to describe as "long tenured workers" people who have not received more than 35 weeks of employment insurance in the past five years, the government is being very hard on workers in the agriculture, forestry, tourism and fishery industries, who are also long tenured workers and who have given their lives to develop the economy.

The forestry, fishery and agriculture sectors existed long before the oil sector. This is what happens. The Conservative government gives guarantees and assistance to the oil industry. Oil is a non-renewable resource. What will happen when we run out? In Quebec, there will still be forests.

Once again, Quebeckers are happy that members from Quebec in the House of Commons did not all support what the Conservatives proposed, which was to diversify the economy and to get rid of the entire forestry sector, by trying to transfer these workers to other sectors.

The Conservatives even had the gall to propose assistance to have these workers transferred and trained in other regions. I know that the oil sands industry needs workers, but I dream of my constituents not having to work in western Canada. I hope that I will once again be responsible and respectful towards my constituents by demanding

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that they be able to stay in their regions, where they were born, and that their children and grandchildren have that same opportunity.

● (1545)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I noted from my colleague's comments that he is saying that, considering the number of small opposition parties in a minority government, coalitions are now becoming more of a reality.

Given that the Bloc Québécois will never form a majority government on its own, with which other parties would it seek to form a coalition after the next election should a majority government not be formed?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, it seems as though the Conservative member has a crystal ball. What she suggested is likely exactly what will happen. There will probably be another minority government after the next election.

The Bloc Québécois has been very conscientious. First of all, we would never be part of a coalition, but we might choose to support a coalition, as we did last time, made up of the parties that had adopted the economic recovery plan proposed by the Bloc Québécois. Thus, we will be there to support all political parties that are willing to work in the interests of Quebec. If an agreement must be signed, as we were prepared to do with the two other parties last time—no matter which parties, as long as they have Quebec's interests at heart—we will be there.

Of course, it is not easy to do when the time comes. We managed to negotiate an agreement. It did not work. Some people were very unhappy about it. The fact remains that the Bloc Québécois was the only responsible party. We have always been responsible, from the very beginning. We know what is happening around the world right now with coalitions. As I was saying, Germany, the strongest country in Europe economically, has a coalition government. That will happen in Canada one day. As long as Quebec's interests are properly defended by a coalition, the Bloc Québécois will be there.

● (1550)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is showing grave disrespect for all Quebeckers who did not vote for the Bloc, for the two-thirds of Quebeckers who voted for other parties running in Quebec. The member is attacking everyone. He says that people who represent other political parties in Quebec are not true Quebeckers.

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If we take a closer look at the Bloc's history in the House, we see that there have been many times when the Bloc Québécois did not defend Quebecers' interests. On the contrary, the party supported sellout agreements, such as the softwood lumber agreement. The NDP was the party that said no to that agreement because it was not in Quebecers' best interests. We were the ones standing up for Quebec workers. We were the ones who said that the agreement would be catastrophic for the industry in Quebec. Unfortunately, it is now clear that we were absolutely right. Quebec has lost thousands of jobs because of the Bloc Québécois' support for this terrible sellout softwood lumber deal. Mills have closed, and now Quebec taxpayers will be forced to pay another \$70 million because of the Bloc Québécois' irresponsibility.

Will the member apologize to all Quebecers for having supported this sellout deal that cost thousands of Quebecers their jobs?

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, my answer is no and I will even elaborate. I just want the NDP member to realize that he does not understand Quebec at all.

Every politician, every political party in Quebec, together with the unions and the owners, agreed that the softwood lumber agreement had to be signed. The entire industry and all the politicians moved on. The problem with the NDP is that it is still hung up on the old softwood lumber agreement. All the politicians, all the managers, all those who work in the forestry sector have moved on. What they want to see is a loan program, an assistance program, a modernization program. Once again, it is unfortunate for him, but the NDP is lagging five years behind.

Forestry is a poor example for the NDP. All leaders were actually in favour of signing the agreement. However, after the agreement was signed, they wanted the industry's recovery to be spurred by loan guarantees and modernization assistance programs. The Conservatives did not implement such measures and they were not supported by the other parties in this House, except for the Bloc.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has forecast a \$56 billion deficit in the near future. The Bloc has suggested that the taxes of oil companies and banks be raised and that funding for the military sector be cut. Instead, the Conservative government, with the support of the NDP, is preparing to implement a bill that will not help the unemployed, seasonal workers or forestry workers. In addition, we have seen that the Conservatives, propped up by the NDP, will continue to pillage the EI fund, just as the Liberals did for a number of years.

I would like to hear my colleague explain how the Bloc Québécois intends to continue defending the interests of Quebecers with the proposals it has made and helping workers with the proposed comprehensive reform of the EI system.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé for his question. He is doing an excellent job in his riding. He summarized the situation very well. First of all, we are, once again, the only party in the House to have proposed a plan to reduce the deficit. That is what we did yesterday.

I would just like to remind the members about something. Yesterday, I listened as the Conservatives boasted that Canada would be the first country to emerge from the crisis. Why is Canada not as deeply mired in the crisis as other countries? Because of our banking

system. When I came here as a member in 2000, the first lobbyists I met with in my office were from the banks. They wanted to merge so that they could acquire American banks. The Bloc Québécois decided to fight bank mergers in every committee that addressed the topic. I would say that we were the ones who saved the Canadian economy because if the banks had merged in 2000, 2001, or 2002 as they wanted, they would have acquired American banks and then been rotten to the core just like their American counterparts. That is the truth.

Once again, my colleague is right, the Bloc is a visionary party for Quebecers and also for Canadians. If our House colleagues take advantage of that and draw on our good ideas, both Quebec and Canada will be much better off.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about Conservatives having a crystal ball. All members in the House know the Bloc, and we can predict one thing for sure, that the Bloc will continue the politics of division in this country.

We have a very strong auto industry in Oshawa, but what the member conveniently forgets is our support for the aerospace industry in Quebec. He also forgets that the auto industry is huge in Quebec. The auto parts industry is a multi-billion dollar industry in Quebec that employs thousands of people.

With his comments today, what we have seen for certain with our crystal ball is that the Bloc does not support auto industry workers in Quebec and, by extension, it does not support auto industry workers in Ontario or anywhere else across the country where the industry sources parts. Again, it is a sad day. These politics of division are pitting one area of the country against the other, one industry within Quebec against another.

I want him to answer this very simple question. For all the years the Bloc has been in Parliament, can he name one thing the Bloc has actually delivered to industry in Quebec or to anyone in Quebec?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I just want to correct one thing the hon. member said.

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The only thing the Bloc is asking for—and I said this in my speech—is that the Conservatives put as much effort into the forestry sector as they have into the automobile industry. It is not complicated. The crisis in the forestry sector started five years ago and the Conservatives have been in power for four of those years. That is what we have always asked for: that the same effort be made. When I provided the figures earlier, I compared both industries. The hon. member is from Oshawa. He is quite pleased that the automobile industry received \$9.6 billion. I am from Quebec. The forestry sector, which represents 25% of Quebec's economy, was promised \$70 million, but it only received \$56 million. That is all we wanted to point out.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in support of the economic recovery bill at second reading. This act will implement not only key measures in Canada's economic plan, but other related vital economic proposals to further secure a strong recovery and protect Canadian jobs.

I am disappointed that the Liberal members have already decided to vote against this important legislation, even before reading it, to support their obsession with forcing an unnecessary election, and that they have again decided to place partisan self-interests ahead of what is best for the Canadian economy.

I remind the Liberal members that we are in the midst of a global economic crisis, unprecedented in recent history, one that only a month ago it was feared could potentially match the Great Depression in both scale and scope. While Canada entered the global recession in among the strongest positions in the world, we are not immune, and Canadians have felt the pain of these challenging economic times. However, they can be optimistic moving forward because our collective strengths make a robust recovery more likely.

As RBC economist Patricia Croft noted earlier this year:

This is not a made-in-Canada recession...but because we are a small open economy we've been caught up... But I do think there are reasons to be hopeful... there is a great story to tell about Canada in that we may come out of this recession much stronger than our global counterparts.

It was against this backdrop that our government tabled the earliest budget in Canadian history, Canada's economic action plan. In tandem with our global partners, we took unprecedented action and made a deliberate decision to run short-term deficits and take actions through timely, targeted and temporary spending to protect and stimulate Canada's economy.

As a result of coordinated and unprecedented global cooperation, the potential global great depression was averted. As TD economist Don Drummond noted:

...we're just past the one-year mark of (the collapse of) Lehman Brothers, and remember all the talk that was being thrown around at that time of the Great Depression? ...yet here we are one year later and we've got evidence that virtually every country in the world is going to have reasonable growth in the third quarter, and some of the emerging economies are quite strong.

Or as the G20 leaders' statement at the recent Pittsburgh summit proclaimed:

...we confronted the greatest challenge to the world economy in our generation. Global output was contracting at a pace not seen since the 1930s. Trade was

plummeting. Jobs were disappearing rapidly. Our people worried that the world was on the edge of depression.

At that time, our countries agreed to do everything necessary to ensure recovery, to repair our financial systems and to maintain the global flow of capital.

It worked.

Our forceful response helped to stop the dangerous sharp decline in global activity and stabilize financial markets. Industrial output is now rising in nearly all of our economies. International trade is starting to recover. Our financial institutions are raising needed capital, financial markets are showing a willingness to invest and lend and confidence has improved.

While the G20 leaders' statement noted the early signs of a global recovery, it cautioned that victory is not yet assured:

A sense of normalcy should not lead to complacency. The process of recovery and repair remains incomplete...The conditions for a recovery of private demand are not yet fully in place. We cannot rest until the global economy is restored to full health...

That is why our Conservative government remains committed to implementing Canada's economic action plan, focusing on the economy as our number one priority. Canada's economic action plan is getting results. It is stimulating the economy and protecting and creating jobs, but while we have made great progress, there is still much more to do. We must stay on course on the economy, staying on course in implementing the economic action plan. Doing anything else would be reckless and irresponsible.

Not everyone agrees. Take, for example, the Liberal Party headquarters. The Liberal leader is trying to force an unnecessary and opportunistic election. The Liberals want an election that is not in the country's best interests, an election that would jeopardize Canada's economic recovery, an action that would meet the very definition of reckless and irresponsible.

● (1600)

Since we introduced Canada's economic action plan, our Conservative government has been tirelessly working on getting money out the door. By June, 80% of the measures from the plan were being implemented and by September, fully 90% of the 2009-10 stimulus funding was complete.

This is an extraordinary achievement and the results are being felt in our economy. Canadians are paying lower taxes. Every time Canadians buy something or look at their pay stubs, they are seeing reduced taxes. Unlike the opposition, we do not believe that Canadians should pay more taxes. Unlike the Liberal leader, we do not believe that we will have to raise taxes. This is what the Liberal leader said to a stunned Chamber of Commerce audience this past spring. He said that, during the recession, "Federal taxes must go up... We will have to raise taxes".

Our Conservative government's record is clear. There has been nearly \$220 billion in overall tax relief since the Conservatives took office in 2006. An average Canadian family is seeing over \$3,000 in tax savings. Businesses are keeping more of their money to reinvest in their workers and their growth and not in bloated bureaucracies in Ottawa. Taxes are at their lowest level in 50 years and, under our Conservative government, they will stay that way.

Government Orders

We are seeing what a low-tax environment has done to position Canada's economy to compete in the future. We are seeing it in the return of businesses that fled higher taxes under the former Liberal government, businesses like one of Canada's most iconic, Tim Hortons. The CFO of Tim Hortons said:

[Moving to Canada] will help Tim Hortons...take advantage of lower Canadian tax rates... [L]ower tax rates help [Tim Hortons] and companies like [them] keep more capital at work and achieve [their] priority in reinvesting in the businesses for further growth.

That is good news for Canada and Canadian businesses. Even a few prominent Liberals have reluctantly admitted that. The president of the New Brunswick Liberal Association, Britt Dysart, said:

[L]ower taxes do matter when it comes to economic development, jobs, population growth, and other good things. In tough economic times, lower taxes matter more than ever as well-established companies such as Tim Hortons decide what locations are best-suited for them and their employees... Like the businesses they work for, skilled workers gravitate to where taxes are lower. Lower taxes work.

The good news does not stop there. Over 4,000 infrastructure and housing projects have already begun. Whether it is funding for wind energy in Prince Edward Island, a nursing residence in remote communities in northern Alberta, much needed social housing in Whitehorse or a new ring road for Edmonton, shovels are in the ground and Canadians are hard at work, building and renewing this country.

Workers are receiving much-needed retraining. At least 44,000 Canadians are receiving training through funds flowing to the provinces and territories. In addition, more than 4,300 young Canadians are obtaining valuable skilled trades training with the help of the \$2,000 apprenticeship completion grant. Colleges and universities are being renewed with \$2 billion through the knowledge infrastructure program.

Projects are already under way, such as the University of Windsor's centre for engineering innovation. These investments are providing much-needed stimulus today while building Canada's knowledge advantage in the future. Access to financing has improved sharply. Over \$131 billion in financing support has helped Canadian businesses and consumers get loans that they need.

Our quick actions in providing financing during the last federal election helped Canada through the worst economic recession. By borrowing at commercial rates, we have protected taxpayers and expect a small rate of return from our investments.

These are all encouraging signs. Our plan is helping Canada recover from its global recession. Indeed, we now expect that the economic action plan will create or maintain 220,000 jobs by the end of 2010. However, this is not all. On top of the 220,000 jobs forecast to be created or maintained, an additional 160,000 plus Canadians are benefiting from work-sharing agreements. This is a forecast largely supported by the independent and impartial OECD, which recently declared:

Canada's fiscal stimulus package should have a relatively large effect in stemming job losses.

●(1605)

While these encouraging signs are welcome, we again must temper our remarks by noting the underlying reality that the recovery is fragile. More work is needed to ensure we do not fall back into economic turmoil. Again, now is not the time to stop providing

stimulus to the economy. Now is not the time to jeopardize our recovery with an unnecessary opportunistic election.

I trust it is becoming clear to the members of the House that the economic recovery act is an important extension of Canada's economic action plan, which will implement key measures to help secure a strong recovery and continue to protect Canadian jobs. I have followed closely the comments of my learned colleagues who have spoken to this act already, but I want to highlight a number of the measures of importance to Canadians and to the people I represent in my riding.

Among such measures, the home renovation tax credit, or HRTC. The HRTC provides up to \$1,350 in tax relief to encourage Canadians to invest in their most precious asset, their home. This measure has been a resounding success right across the country. Do not take my word for it, listen to the words of a recent *Ottawa Citizen* editorial that highlights how effective the HRTC has been. It states the HRTC:

—has turned out to be effective and smart...Even the quietest streets roar with hammers and saws...This is keeping construction workers employed who, in turn, spend money that keeps others employed. Home centres and hardware stores are humming...helping the construction industry was exactly the right thing to do. Credit where credit is due, when it comes to the reno credit.

The economic recovery act also implements the first time home buyers' tax credit. That will provide tax relief of up to \$750 on the purchase of a new home, helping to stimulate the housing sector by making it easier for young Canadians to buy their first home. This \$750 saved will go back into the pockets of ordinary Canadians who can then use it to fund their priorities.

The economic recovery act would also enhance benefits under the working income tax benefit, which will effectively double the total tax relief provided by this measure. These enhanced benefits will provide additional income to support low income working Canadians and help ensure that more Canadians are financially better off by getting a job.

Many have praised this important tax incentive for assisting low income Canadians get over the welfare wall. In the words of the OECD, "Recent moves to increase the generosity of Canada's working income tax benefit are welcome, particularly given that the benefit is strongly targeted to the lowest income households".

These are but a few of the measures protected through the economic recovery act. Along with others, I have not mentioned further measures, including the Liberals' plan on voting against all of this. They vote against enhancing tax benefits for farmers who are facing tough times due to droughts and floods. They vote against amendments to the Canada pension plan, which were unanimously agreed to by all provinces during the triennial review. They vote against provisions to give low income countries a bigger voice in the IMF and strengthen our commitment to global tax relief, and much more. All these measures are necessary measures to help Canada combat this economic recession.

Government Orders

We are achieving results. Canada is on track to lead the world's leading economies out of the recession. The IMF says our economic expansion in 2010 will be stronger than all others in the G7, stronger than the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France and Italy. As the French finance minister, Christine Lagarde, said recently, "I think we can be inspired by the Canadian situation. There were some people who said "I want to be Canadian".

While Canada is doing better than our international peers, we must not be complacent. Our economy remains fragile. Instead of thinking about what is best for the economy, unfortunately the Liberal Party of Canada is trying to force an opportunistic election by voting against the economic recovery act, voting against first time home buyers tax credit to help young families, voting against the working income tax benefit to help low income Canadians and, shamefully, voting against the home renovation tax credit and much more.

• (1610)

It is shameful and it is disappointing to Canadians following at home and disheartening to my colleagues on this side of the aisle. While our Conservative government's policies have helped our economy and put Canadians back to work, the Liberal Party is trying to force an election that will jeopardize our economic recovery. We must stay the course.

I urge Parliament to support the economic recovery act and Canada's economic recovery.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what exit strategy does the government have with regard to the \$56 billion plus deficit? How does it propose to get out of a fiscal hole that it has dug itself into? I remind the government that it inherited a \$12.5 billion surplus when it came to office?

Liberals had a strategy. We eliminated a \$42.5 billion deficit when we became the government in 1993, with the help of Canadians. What is your exit strategy going to be? Is it going to be higher taxes? Is it going to be looking at other sources of revenue? How do you propose to get out of it?

• (1615)

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member to address questions through the Chair and not directly to members.

The hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, first, we intend to get out of it by doing our best not to plunge Canada into an unneeded, unnecessary election. He wants to fight a recovery. We want to fight a recession.

Let me talk a bit more about how the Liberals claimed they got out of the last recession. What did they do? They took billions of dollars that were placed in the employment insurance plan and placed it against the deficit. Then they went to people who were sick, people on social assistance and the provinces and removed \$25 billion from that plan. If we accounted for inflation, think what those dollars would amount to today.

We will not do that. We will not reduce transfer payments to the provinces. We will not raise taxes, as the Liberal leader has said he would do.

During my report to Parliament on the economic recovery act, I mentioned a great deal of things that we would do. These will

generate the kinds of incomes and jobs that will help the Government of Canada pay off any deficits that we have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like my Conservative colleague to indicate whether he agrees with his colleague from Oshawa that the assistance to the automobile industry allowed the automobile parts industry in Quebec to survive.

In my riding, in Magog and in Cowansville, there were at least a dozen auto parts companies and they have all closed down.

There are omnibus bills that incorporate two or three things. This bill deals with home renovations, first homes, the IMF, Canada pensions and an agreement on litigation, a bit like Bill C-10, which was a real mishmash.

How can the hon. member think that the opposition could vote in favour of such legislation without constantly being criticized for it afterward? We do not want to vote for such a combination.

How does he think the opposition can live with such legislation? Once in a while it may be acceptable, but otherwise it is deadly.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, first, every member in the House has probably suffered job losses in their communities due to the global recession. Every industrialized country in the western economies, and almost every country in the world, has lost jobs due to the economic recession. However, every reputable world financial leader has said that this government placed Canada in the best position going into the recovery and coming out. Why did they say that? Because of the very things the member has indicated.

What does the home renovation tax credit mean? First, the home renovation tax credit means that companies, people who work in that field, contractors, et cetera will employ more employees. The second thing is people will buy doors and windows that might be made in his riding. They certainly are made in the Ottawa area.

All we have to do is watch the news on television to find out it is putting more people to work in the building trades. It is also helping the lumber industry. When people put additions on their houses, they use lumber. When people put additions on their houses, they put in windows and doors. Those are all things that create employment. We set tax rates, the lowest in the world, which attract businesses to come in Canada, which will produce more goods, put more people to work, more unionized jobs, good-paying jobs, so they can pay just enough taxes to afford the very programs that we hold near and dear.

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• (1620)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will re-ask the hon. member a question that was asked by the member of the Liberal Party. I am not interested in knowing how the Liberal Party got rid of the debt, although that was deplorable. I am interested in knowing how the Conservative government is going to pay off the debt. That is all I am interested in, not rhetoric about the Liberal Party.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, I thought I answered some of the question, but for his benefit, I will recap some of the things we will be doing and some of the things we have been doing that will result in us being able to pay down Canada's deficit. Then we will work on the debt. However, we have to work on the deficit first.

First, what we will not do is bring in huge programs that will last forever, that will cause a structural deficit. We will not do it on the backs of the poor. We will not do it on the backs of people who are ill. We will not do it on the backs of the provinces and territories.

However, what we will do, and what the world economists have said we will do, is create the kind of jobs and the kind of economy where businesses will thrive and more people will work. In turn they will pay taxes to maintain those kind of programs that Canadians have come to rely upon, such as universal health care, employment insurance that we can afford. By creating good-paying, unionized in some cases, jobs, people will pay taxes.

The government has a stellar record. For the member's edification, we did pay almost \$40 billion down in debt in a budget that he voted against.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is one of my neighbours and he also has a strong auto sector in his riding. I want to get his comments about the Bloc's attack on the support we have given to the automotive sector in Quebec.

The Bloc member has basically confirmed that the Bloc would like all auto parts plants in Quebec to close. I know from numbers from General Motors that one company in Ontario sourced anywhere between \$10 billion and \$15 billion of auto parts, many of them coming from Quebec, yet he criticizes our support of the automotive sector.

What does the member think about the misinformation being spread by the Bloc members? What does he think about the Bloc Québécois pitting industry against industry in Quebec? What is the strategy to justify their support of the Liberal leader's unnecessary election? What does the Bloc have against the auto—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I will have to stop the hon. member there because there are only about 30 seconds left for the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would hope, and I am quite certain, that every single member in this House wants what is best for their constituents.

There is one very distinct difference between the other parties and the Bloc Québécois members and that is because they are here for a specific purpose. It is not just in the best interests of their constituents. It is to try to undermine this federation called Canada. It is for that reason that we have to be suspicious whenever the Bloc

Québécois does or does not do something because its ultimate aim is to render this place ineffective.

I do not think any of the other—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I should perhaps just inform the House that the first five hours of debate have concluded. From now on the speeches will be 10 minutes, and the question and comment period will be 5 minutes.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate this afternoon on Bill C-51. I will not surprise anyone in the House by saying that NDP members will be voting in favour of the bill. The entire first part of the bill implements the ways and means motion that we supported in the House just last month.

In particular, I want to highlight the inclusion in the bill of the first time home buyers' tax credit and the home renovation tax credit. Both of these measures have been well received in communities right across the country, and although it may be hard to believe inside the bubble of Ottawa, most Canadians had actually thought that the home renovation tax credit had been enacted long ago. Why else, after all, would the government be spending so many tax dollars promoting this program on television and on those big envelopes it is distributing for saving receipts?

Canadians did what their government asked of them. They stimulated their local economies by investing in home renovations, assured by their government that they would be eligible for a tax credit if they spent the money before February 1 of next year.

Let us not kid ourselves, voting against this tax credit now, after our constituents have spent their money in good faith, would be victimizing them yet again during the worst recession since the Great Depression. My constituents deserve better. All constituents deserve better. When I tell them that I am here to make Parliament work for them, I will walk that talk by voting in favour of this measure. No, it is not good enough to vote against this measure now and say we will implement it later, just look at what is ahead on the horizon.

In the 2009-10 provincial budget, the McGuinty Liberals announced that they would be harmonizing the provincial sales tax with the federal government's goods and services tax, effective July 1, 2010. This is terrible news for Ontarians because many items that we need and use every single day, from gas and electricity to newspapers and the Internet will now be subject to a full 8% tax increase at the point of purchase. It will also be charged on all labour costs incurred during home renovations. If the home renovation tax credit is delayed, any benefit from the program will largely be eaten up by the increased tax burden of the HST.

While I am on the HST, let me add this. This blatant tax grab might never have happened had the federal Conservative government not bribed its provincial Liberal counterparts to introduce it. Apparently Dalton McGuinty was reluctant to introduce such an unfair tax during this recession, so the federal finance minister urged him along by offering the Ontario government an additional \$4.3 billion of federal tax money to introduce this new tax increase.

Government Orders

An hon. member: He went along with it.

Ms. Chris Charlton: That is right. Canadians' federal tax dollars are hard at work buying them a big fat provincial tax increase. No wonder voter cynicism and apathy is so high. Canadians are rightly asking themselves whether anyone is committed to making Parliament work for them.

I am proud to say that New Democrats are doing just that. We are absolutely committed to making Parliament work for the seniors who built this country and for the hard-working families who need their government's help to survive this devastating recession.

I ran for public office because I wanted to fight for residents of Hamilton Mountain and to stand up for our community. Before I was elected, we had a government MP representing us for 13 years. Yet, the concerns of our riding were rarely articulated and even more seldomly acted upon by the government. While some may believe it is important to elect an MP from the government side, our experience in Hamilton Mountain suggests the opposite. Instead of electing a yes person to the Prime Minister, Hamilton Mountain residents know that it is much more likely that the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

I take that responsibility seriously and I am proud to stand up for my community. That is why my very first motion in the House was on comprehensive reform on seniors' issues. It dealt with everything from income security to health care to drug costs to safe and affordable housing, and for lifelong opportunities for learning and recreation. I was thrilled when that motion passed in the House. In fact, I am delighted to see that some of the principles embodied in that motion are now reflected in the bill that is before us today.

The amendments to the Canada pension plan in Bill C-51 clearly enhance the income security of seniors, particularly those who want or need to collect their CPP before the age of 65.

Similarly, I had the privilege of tabling a motion on comprehensive EI reform in the spring of this year. That motion too passed in the House. In Ontario, where the recession has hit the manufacturing sector particularly hard, the ripple effect of job losses has impacted workers in the biggest plants and in the smallest of businesses. Those workers are the truly innocent victims of this recession and they deserve the government's help.

• (1625)

Some say that the latest round of EI reforms brought forward by the government was not enough, and that is absolutely right. However, it will help over 180,000 laid off workers and, by extension, their families. How could I not support that?

It reminds me of the story of the man walking along a beach. The sun was shining and it was a beautiful day. Off in the distance he could see a girl going back and forth between the surf's edge and the beach. Back and forth this child went, picking up a starfish and throwing it into the water. As the man approached, he could see that there were thousands of starfish stranded on the sand as a result of the natural action of the tide. The man was struck by the apparent futility of the task. There were far too many starfish. Many of them were sure to perish.

As he approached, the girl continued the task of picking up starfish one by one and throwing them into the surf. As he came up to her he said, "You must be crazy. There are thousands of miles of beach covered with starfish. You can't possibly make a difference". The girl looked at the man, stooped down, picked up one more starfish and threw it back into the ocean. She turned back to the man and said, "It sure made a difference to that one".

That is what working in Parliament is like. We do not always win every fight, but we will lose them all if we are not even in them. Often, even the smallest victory makes a profoundly positive difference for thousands of Canadians. That is why, lost in all of the partisanship that drives the media coverage of this place, much of the really productive work on behalf of our constituents goes largely unnoticed.

Many observers were surprised last week that New Democrats would vote in support of a government motion. The inference was that it was unprecedented in the House. Despite the fact that I am as fiercely partisan as any other member in the House, I have actually voted with the Conservatives 37 times on government legislation and I am going to do it again on this bill. The test for me is simply whether the matter before the House is good public policy.

When we had to put an end to the Liberals' election financing run amok, I voted with the government to improve accountability after the sponsorship scandal. When we had the opportunity to deal more effectively with criminals convicted of offences involving firearms, I voted with the government.

When we established the Public Health Agency of Canada, I voted with the government. When we amended the Youth Criminal Justice Act, I voted with the government. When we protected the safety and security of Canadians with respect to human pathogens and toxins, I voted with the government and I did it again when we amended the Employment Insurance Act to increase benefits. To me, that is the essence of good representation.

Yes, it is the role of opposition parties to oppose and expose the weaknesses of government proposals in debate, but we are doing that because we are motivated by wanting to effect change that will improve the lives of our constituents. That is how we make Parliament work. It is by voting in favour of good public policy and against flawed pieces of legislation. Because no bill is ever perfect, sometimes members have to weigh the pros and cons in making their decisions.

The bill before us today is a case in point. I support the first part, as I have outlined. Some of the changes to the CPP are not just welcome but overdue. The extension of the CBC's borrowing limit is something that New Democrats have been advocating for months. The housekeeping amendments on other items in the bill are necessary, albeit not remarkable.

Government Orders

The only clause that gives me pause is the one relating to the Bretton Woods agreement and I want to reserve my right to speak against that at a later time. As always, the devil is in the details and when it comes to amendments proposed by the International Monetary Fund, due diligence demands closer scrutiny.

Again, we cannot pick and choose which parts of this bill we support and which we oppose. Our role in the House is to cast a straight up and down yes or no vote and, taken on the whole, I am proud to support this bill on behalf of my constituents.

•(1630)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that in Bill C-51 there is a provision dealing with a first time home buyers' tax credit, which is being introduced on a permanent basis. Yet, we have what is a very popular home renovation tax credit system, which was brought in on a one time basis only.

Seeing as how the government has invested huge amounts of money advertising this program, maybe more than all the taxes that people are going to save in the entire program, I would suggest the government announce an extension of this program so that Canadians can have the benefit of this program on a long-term basis.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I welcome that suggestion because it would help the hard-working families and seniors who are trying to do the right thing, not just by stimulating the economy but who rather are serious about maintaining retrofitting, greening their homes and who do want to do their bit to help us fight climate change. I think an extension of the program would absolutely be welcomed by them.

More important, we need to have a look at the people who are involved in providing the labour for those home renovations. This economic downturn is having a devastating impact on them as well. One of the things I worry about, because the HST, starting in July 2010, will be applied to the services they provide for home renovations, is that entire part of our economy will be driven underground.

By extending the home renovation tax credit, not only would it help homeowners, but it would ensure that part of our economy would not be operating underground but would be participating as normal participants in this economy. Although the government always seems to be in a rush to support big businesses and banks, it needs to ensure it does its fair share to protect the small businesses in all of our communities.

•(1635)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening intently to the member's desire for supporting and representing her constituents and her desire for social justice. She has supported the government when it suited her constituents, but why did she not support the early learning and child care strategy? Why did she vote against aboriginal health and well-being under the Kelowna accord? Why did she vote against the environment?

If she is truly concerned about social justice, can she explain why she voted against those very major issues, social justice agenda issues that would have made a difference in the lives of a lot of Canadians?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I wish I had been here to vote against all of those things. Unfortunately, I was not elected at that time. The member appears to be going back four years before I was elected here.

However, during that particular election campaign in 2006, I remember my constituents saying that the Liberals had been in power for 13 years and had promised early child care for 13 years, had promised significant help for aboriginal communities for 13 years, and had talked about the Kyoto accord and acting on that, although not for 13 years because they were late converts to that process, but, nonetheless, for a significant amount of time before that election.

For 13 years the Liberals talked but they did not act and did not deliver. I think the representation that constituents deserve is not just MPs who talk the talk but members of Parliament who will walk the talk.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech and I was happy to hear that she supports good government policy. She has voted with our government. I am very pleased that there seems to be an epiphany over there and that now they will be supporting the good policies coming out of this government.

I want to ask her a little bit about the past. Particularly important to me is the auto sector. We put in an auto innovation fund that supported the auto sector and her party voted against that. It voted against our support for the auto sector in this past budget. Does she not think that was good policy?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, as I said during my speech, it is absolutely critical for us to vote on packages as a whole because we do not have the opportunity to pick and choose.

One of the problems with the government is that it wants to choose its own winners and losers. I come from Hamilton where our steel sector is being devastated. Forestry sectors are being devastated in other parts of the country. We need a comprehensive package to fight this recession, not—

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, automotive industry; the hon. member for York West, veterans affairs; the hon. member Laval—Les Îles, official languages.

Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand here today and speak in support of Bill C-51, the economic recovery act.

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Before I start illuminating many of the reasons why this bill deserves the support of all members of this place, I will first add to the chorus of congratulations we heard many times throughout the day in stating the fact that our finance minister, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, has received a very prestigious award from an organization called *Euromoney* magazine, an international magazine that has been around for about 27 years. It is a real earmark and spokesmodel for the economic climate worldwide. I want to say that for the first time in 27 years since this award has been handed out, we have a Canadian finance minister who has won the prestigious award of finance minister of the year.

I wanted to point that out because there is a real strong reason for that. It means that the world is watching Canada with great envy as we deal with this global economic crisis that has seized almost every industrialized nation in the world, which is one of the many reasons that our finance minister won this very prestigious award.

Why should our finance minister have won this? There are very good reasons. The economic recovery act speaks to the implementation of many of the temporary stimulus measures that we brought forward to combat this global recession, things such as the homeowner's tax improvement credit and the first-time home buyers' credit. These temporary measures are meant to kickstart our economy and get our economy back on track.

Where other industrialized nations throughout the world are struggling, our economy seems to be showing signs of recovery and that is due in large part to the chief architect, our finance minister.

I also want to say that we could not pass this legislation without the support of other members and other parties in this House. Therefore, I really do want to quite sincerely congratulate, applaud and thank our colleagues in the New Democratic Party for offering their support when this legislation comes before the House for a vote. I must say that it is a bit of a surprise but a very good surprise because on many occasions in the past, at least 79 times, the New Democratic Party has opposed every initiative that we have brought forward.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think you will remember, as I do and members opposite remember, when we brought down our budget in January, the New Democratic Party said that it would oppose the budget without even reading it. Something has changed but I do not know what that is. Perhaps it is because it had an epiphany. Perhaps it has just discovered that our government is handling our economy with great due diligence. I want to thank our colleagues in the New Democratic Party for finally seeing the light in agreeing with us that our approach to managing Canada's economy is the correct approach.

I wish, on the other hand, that many of the members of other political parties in opposition would take the same approach, a considered and studied approach that the NDP has taken, to closely examine what we are attempting to do and in fact take a close look at the accomplishments that we have made over the course of the last several months. If they did, I am sure they would join the chorus of NDP members who have stood in this House, applauded our recovery efforts and said, quite clearly and quite graphically, that they will be supporting this legislation when it comes to a vote.

Once again, on behalf of all of us on the government side of the House, I applaud and congratulate members of the NDP for finally seeing the light when it comes to what is required to stimulate an economy that has been in trouble.

Before my closing remarks, I want to point out a few things that perhaps members of the Liberal opposition should recognize. Canadians at this point in time, in the midst of an economic recession, do not want to see an unwanted and unnecessary election. I beseech the members opposite to pay careful attention to this because if other members of this House, particularly members of the Liberal Party, paid careful attention to some of the information we were gleaned from polling companies, they would find out that Canadians do not want an election. However, members of the Liberal Party, the official opposition, seem bent on forcing this election upon Canadians who desperately want to concentrate on getting our economy back on track.

● (1640)

I can honestly say from our standpoint that we have no intention and no desire to enter into an election at this time.

When we examine the polling numbers of all major polling firms in Canada, the great irony is that it seems that only one party would benefit if an election were held today and that is the Conservative Party, and yet we are the only party that has consistently said that we do not want an election. The reason we do not want an election is that we understand the need to concentrate on economic recovery. That is all we want to do right now. The economy is fragile. Yes, it has shown strong signs of recovery but we are not there yet.

We will still face some heartache and some hardship. Unemployment numbers will continue to be higher than we want. We understand that but we also understand that as a Parliament we need to work together to focus on economic recovery and put in place elements of our economic action plan that will help stimulate the economy.

The stimulus package that we are talking about today is temporary in nature. We are only looking at a two year window but it dovetails nicely with the ongoing efforts that our government has made to keep taxes down, to create a regulatory environment that attracts new business into Canada. I think we have done that.

A good shining example of what we have been doing to attract business to this country is the recent announcement that Tim Hortons, a Canadian institution, an icon, is coming back to Canada to set up its worldwide operations. Why? It is because this government understands the reasons that businesses want to come to Canada, or to any other jurisdiction for that matter, to do business and that is lower taxes and an understanding government that wants to promote economic achievement.

For too many years, in fact for 13 long, dark years, the previous Liberal government did not understand that fundamental truism, and so taxes rose. The Liberals drove companies out of Canada to other jurisdictions worldwide where they could find a better tax regime. Now we are finding that companies want to come back to Canada. They want to open up their shops in Canada and do business in Canada, and that is because of the vision of our Prime Minister and our finance minister.

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We may hear opposition members yell, complain, whine and catcall, but the reality is that Canadians understand that this government is acting in their best interests.

Business leaders, both small and large, understand that our government wants to lead the world in terms of economic recovery. We want to lead the world in terms of giving businesses an opportunity to create employment opportunities for their people.

This, in simplistic terms, is what the economic action plan is all about. It is a plan to attract businesses, to increase jobs, to increase employment and to ensure that Canadians can feel the strong effects of our efforts to improve their lives on a day to day basis.

Let us not forget that in the first four years of our government we have reduced the GST by two full points. We are on the way to reducing business tax to the lowest level of most of the G20 countries. In fact, by 2012 or 2015 at least, we should have a combined personal and corporate income tax of 25%. That would be so much of an attraction to businesses to open up their shops in Canada and also be of benefit to average Canadians who want to take more of their hard-earned wages back home with them, put it in their pockets and spend it so they can put it back into the economy.

However, what we cannot afford at this time is an election. We cannot afford to destroy the good work that this government has done over the past several months to get Canada into a position where we will come out of the recession stronger than we have ever been before. That is because of the vision of our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance.

• (1645)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I only have one minute to ask a question, yet I have about 100 questions I would like to ask the member.

If anybody were ever to believe the great story the member just told us, it would make us all think we were in great hands. However, we know that is not the case.

Clearly the award the Minister of Finance received today was probably for how he dealt with the \$13 billion surplus left over from the Liberals, rather than how he has dealt with the current crisis we are in today.

In any event, going on to the fundamental issues about the thousands of unemployed, issues like Nortel, the companies that are going bankrupt and people losing their pensions, I do not hear any comment about what we are going to do with all those people who are struggling to deal with a variety of issues.

What is the hon. member going to tell people like the pensioners who are losing their life savings and other seniors whose pensions going to drop 30% because those companies are going bankrupt? What are you doing to help them and what are you doing to help those companies to prevent them from going bankrupt?

• (1650)

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind members to direct their questions through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her kind words about my remarks. I also thank her for once again raising the issue of our finance minister who has been awarded Finance Minister of the Year by *Euromoney* magazine. This is a 40-year-old publication that deals in financial markets worldwide and is highly respected. I point out again that he is the first Canadian finance minister to ever win this.

During the 13 long dark years of Liberal rule, previous to our taking over the reins of government, we had many prominent Liberal politicians occupy the post of finance minister. The current member for Wascana was finance minister. Did he ever win finance minister of the year? No. The former finance minister, the former prime minister, Mr. Paul Martin, did he ever win finance minister of the year? No. We even had a former prime minister beyond that, Mr. Jean Chrétien, who for a time in a previous government was finance minister. Did he ever win finance minister of the year? No.

It just shows that international institutions and international jurisdictions recognize the fine work our finance minister is doing for our country.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to get back to Bill C-51. With regard to the CPP amendments, the bill offers greater flexibility and choice for people approaching retirement years. It would reduce incentives for early retirement and increase incentives to stay longer in the workforce. It would improve the averaging formula and would boost pensions below the maximum. There are also voluntary contributions for post-65 claimants allowed for secure pension enhancement to age 70.

There are some flaws to this. It does not amount to a significant increase in security for seniors. More important, at least 30% of Canadians are still without retirement savings.

I know the government is doing a study into the whole pension issue. Could the member enlighten us as to the future plans for pension improvement?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my hon. colleague from the NDP for having the vision and the foresight to recognize the fine work our government is doing in handling Canada's economy.

I understand the member was probably a little misguided for the several months prior to his conversion, when he did not realize the depth and the due diligence we had done to handle this fragile economy. However, whether it be an epiphany or whether it be because he has finally discovered that our efforts are having a positive effect, I thank the member.

NDP members deserve a lot of credit for changing their minds. It takes a big person to stand and say that the members were wrong those 79 times when they opposed the government, that they were wrong when they said that the government did not know how to handle the economy.

On behalf of this government, I thank all member of the NDP for admitting their mistakes and finally realizing this government is on the way to taking Canada back to the strongest position financially of any country in the G20.

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Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all the talk about the Minister of Finance winning his award, I have to dampen a little of the excitement. Our friend and colleague from Wascana, the former finance minister, apparently had to go to outpatients today. He pulled a muscle in his back.

Apparently it is attributed to the fact that the current Minister of Finance has been hanging off the coattails of the member for Wascana, who put in place the financial fundamentals to carry us in such good shape into this current situation. I think everybody recognizes that. I know, with his good health, our colleague will be back here tomorrow.

I have not been in on the debate all day, but from what I have seen, each person who has spoken this afternoon has given a bit of a history lesson. Even in question period today, the leader of the NDP helped out with a bit of history. I know one thing about the House. When something is said inside the House, the other parties will do their very best to remind the individual what was said years prior.

The Leader of the Opposition had weighed in today with a comment that came directly from our current Prime Minister, during the whole debate about the HST and the impact it is having. During the GST debate, the Prime Minister had said that there was collusion between the provinces and the federal government to impose another tax on the people. The leader of the NDP reminded him of that today, and that is worthy.

One thing we see time and time again from the government is this selective amnesia. Its position today does not necessarily reflect the way it was talking weeks, months and certainly years ago. It is a completely different story. In my comments during my brief time here today, I would like to remind the government of several things.

When I first came to the House, I was a member of the Chrétien government. I remember the attacks that were levied on the government at the time. I remember the attacks that were levied on our finance minister, former Prime Minister Paul Martin. One of the most ruthless members in the House would have been the current Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

I remember him going after the finance minister day after day at that time because the amount of surplus was too big. That surplus was always applied to the debt, but it was too big. One year the finance minister had anticipated a \$3 billion surplus. It came in as a \$6 billion surplus, which was applied to the debt that accrued prior to 1993. The members were outraged that we were able to put that much money on the debt.

I think Canadians will look back to those days when a government was in a position to apply \$6 billion to the debt and think of them as the good old days of government in Canada.

Another thing has been talked about a fair amount through this crisis. One of the things that has served us so well through this global economic crisis, and Canadians are unified on this, has been the banking system and the regulation of it. We have seen the meltdown south of the border. We have seen other countries and the problems that they have had.

I know, on several occasions over the last weeks and months, the government has been taking credit for our banks being so solid and

performing so well. We on this side know, and most Canadians know, that during the whole debate on deregulation of the banks, Reformers voted 100% for that deregulation. It was successive Liberal governments that stood by the banks and regulation in the banks. That is the reason why our banks have been able to survive this financial storm.

• (1655)

It is important to remind Canadians about that. It is certainly important to remind the House about the banking system and the way the position has changed over the last little while.

I know we are talking about the financial bill, but the Prime Minister's new position on the G20 is one that hits us all. When Paul Martin brought forward the idea of the G20, he was very aware that Canada had a responsibility. If Canada wanted to be a world leader, it had to be a bigger player in the world. He talked about China, India and emerging economies. When he talked about the G20, he was vilified. The current Prime Minister said it was a sign of a weak nation, multilateralism absolutely bad, G20 was a bad idea.

Now the Prime Minister wants to be the poster boy for the G20. He invented it. Time and time again, issue after issue, we have seen what has been said before and what is convenient to be said now. They are completely different stories.

The one that hurts and scares us most is this. Last year the Conservatives were trying to reinforce in the minds of Canadians that all was well, that there were no problems with the economy, that we would get through this and that people were nervous Nellies about the economy. We on this side were telling the government to get its house in order, to ensure we would have a plan coming into this downturn. Nothing was being done by the government. It had said all was fine. The Conservatives called an unnecessary and illegal election at the time. Through that election, they said they would balance the budgets, that there would be a small surplus. We have seen how that has evolved. We have seen the end of the story.

However, maybe we have not seen the end of the story because we get chapter after chapter added on. First we had a \$13 billion surplus, then it went to an \$18 billion deficit, up to a \$30 billion deficit. It is up around \$54 billion to \$60 billion. We anticipate that by the end of December it may reach \$70 billion. If Conservatives are not looking at addressing that for three years, it would mean adding \$210 billion to the debt of this nation. My kids, my grandkids and probably great-grandkids are going to be saddled with that. Canadians deserve better.

In the context of the remarks, I come back to why Canadians should be concerned. We have not seen anything that gives us confidence in the amount of money that is being spent and the amount of money that is coming in. What is going to be at the fiscal end and where is this all going to end? There is reason for concern—

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• (1700)

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member suggested that the election called last year was illegal. That is false and there is a court action at present. Before making accusations like that, the member should really have his facts correct. I ask him to withdraw the remark.

The Deputy Speaker: I am not sure that is a point of order, but I see the member for Cape Breton—Canso rising. He has one minute left in his remarks.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that was a point of order either, but the four year election plan was put forward by the government and was adopted by the House. Maybe he would prefer if I use the word inappropriate or the word unnecessary. Maybe my colleagues could help me out with that one. I am sorry. There are probably a number of other words I could have used.

We cannot rely on information that comes from the government. We cannot put any trust or faith in the numbers that come from it. When the few numbers do come forward, it seems to be a big surprise at the end of each quarter and the surprise gets worse and worse. As we go forward, I do not know where this will end, but I know the mess we had to clean up the last time. That is going to be the good old days when we look at the mess we are going to have to clean up this time.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through you to the chief government whip, there is a growing sense of urgency in getting the final stages of the home renovation tax credit through. Building suppliers in my riding are saying that having this is the difference between keeping their heads above water and not. We have new-found support from the NDP. In fact, it is even asking to extend the home renovation tax credit into next year.

My question for the chief government whip is, even though he is requiring that his MPs vote against the home renovation tax credit, is he going to allow them, when they do their home renovations, to take advantage of the tax credit themselves?

• (1705)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Chief opposition whip, Mr. Speaker. She is seeing into the future.

With respect to the home renovation tax credit, we all know that what the government is putting forward is merely smoke and mirrors.

The fact is no ways and means motion has to be passed by this House in order to implement a tax credit. If we were going to impose a further tax, then yes, a ways and means motion would have to come to the House, and would have to be debated and would have to be voted on. However, for a tax credit like that, it is not necessary. Again, it plays into the overall game, it plays into the strategy the government is employing to try to make good guys and bad guys, winners and losers.

We have no faith that there is any truism in the numbers coming forward, certainly in the action on this home renovation tax credit, it just underlines our concern.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the *National Post* on Friday, May 23, 2003, the current Prime

Minister, at the time a member of the Alliance Conservative, whatever we want to call it, said about a G20 initiative of Paul Martin:

Canada now relies on what is essentially a “weak nation strategy”—multilateral participation to conceal and deny dependency on its key ally.

Perhaps my hon. colleague would like to comment on this.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, again, I spoke briefly about that particular issue during my comments. It is a complete role reversal. The Prime Minister wants to position himself as a champion and poster boy for the G20.

We have seen it time after time, on issue after issue. On income trusts, the Conservatives said one thing and did something completely different. With respect to the promise to the veterans and the veterans' widows on VIP, the Conservatives said one thing and did something completely different. We have seen this time and time again. That is why we have no confidence in the government. It is why we do not have trust in the government. With the information the Conservatives are giving Canadians, it has become spin, it has become a campaign to position themselves, and the spending of public dollars to put their position out there is unconscionable.

All Canadians want is truth. If we could get that, I think this House would operate on a much better basis.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. May I have the consent of the House to table a document?

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table a document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker criticized at length the government for all of the spending we are doing. Yet, less than a week ago, members of his party stood en masse and applauded their leader when he accused this government of starving the beast, in other words, not investing enough in government agencies.

I wonder how, on one hand, the Liberals are accusing us of not spending enough and, on the other hand, are saying that we are spending way too much.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the whole essence of the leader's comment was that it is starving the revenues coming in to the federal government and handcuffing the federal government in its ability to provide services for Canadians, especially Canadians in need.

What we have seen is that the government has not been fair and it does not care. There are citizens out there who are hurting. The reference was made by the Liberal leader that the government is starving the revenues and it is no longer able to provide for those most in need in this nation, and that is a shame.

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• (1710)

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak to second reading of the economic recovery act. This important piece of legislation before the House includes key provisions from budget 2009, Canada's economic action plan, along with many other important initiatives.

During this ongoing global crisis, our Conservative government's number one priority throughout remains protecting the economy. We also believe, as do the vast majority of Canadians, that the economy should remain the number one priority of this Parliament and certainly not throw Canada into another unnecessary election.

This is not the time for political games but a time to focus on the important work that is needed to be done to ensure a strong economic recovery. We must continue to work on implementing Canada's economic action plan. It is a plan that is working, a plan that is protecting and creating jobs. It is a plan that we need to ensure stays on track.

While we are seeing some early signs of a potential global economic recovery, we must remember that it is just that. It is a potential recovery and one that is both tentative and fragile.

The G7 finance ministers and the Central Bank governors stated in a communiqué following meetings in Turkey this weekend:

In recent months we have started to see encouraging signs of a global economic recovery and continued improvement in financial market conditions. However, there is no room for complacency since the prospects for growth remain fragile and labor market conditions are not yet improving.

On the international scene as well as the national scene, obviously the recognition is there.

Clearly, the job is not done. We have to stay the course. We must ensure implementation of Canada's economic action plan both to ensure a strong recovery and, very important, to support the coordinated global efforts under way across the entire world where we are working collectively on the same track with other nations. The economic recovery act is just one way that we are doing exactly that. This economic recovery act will implement key measures in our action plan, another vital initiative that will help to secure a sustained recovery and certainly protect jobs.

We are continuing our proud tax-cutting legacy with the economic recovery act, legislation that will implement a slew of tax-slashing measures, measures as popular with Canadians as they are important in spurring a strong recovery, such as: implementing the temporary home renovation tax credit, or HRTC; implementing the first-time home buyers tax credit; enhancing the benefits provided under the working income tax benefit to help the working poor; extending the existing tax deferral available to farmers dealing with severe weather; and relaxing tariffs on temporarily imported shipping containers. These are but a few of the many elements in this progressive plan.

Shamefully, the Liberal leader and Liberal members are voting against this bill and all of these important measures. It is incredible. I ask why they are doing that. Is it to throw Canada back into another election which nobody, I repeat nobody, wants?

The Liberal Party is voting against helping the working poor, farmers, homeowners and the men and women in retail and construction whose jobs have been saved by the success of programs such as the HRTC. Maybe our Liberal colleagues have not picked up a local newspaper. Maybe they are not watching television these days. Maybe they are not listening to radio shows. Maybe they have not walked into their local Home Hardware store. Maybe they have not talked to their constituents. Maybe even some of them have not talked to a family member.

I can assure them that the home renovation tax credit is working. As a matter of fact, it is more than working; it is a runaway success. It is successful in doing exactly what we said it would do and more. It is helping families improve and build value in their homes, their most important investment, while supporting jobs in areas ranging from contractors, construction, retail, forestry and more all at the same time.

As a respected financial columnist, Sun Media's Alan Caplan, remarked, the HRTC is "financial stimulus where it counts". It is the fastest and easiest way to get money into the economy, create jobs and then get new income tax payments from the people hired to do the work. It is a well rounded success at both ends of the spectrum. Putting people to work is something this tax credit has done in spades.

The tax rebate of up to \$1,350 for home renovations has created a flurry of small projects. The result? All over the country there are brand new decks, roofs, driveways and brickwork.

• (1715)

The Canadian Home Builders Association said that the renovation credit is creating a construction spike across the country. I can see it in my riding and any other riding I have been in. This is keeping construction workers employed, who in turn spend money to keep other people employed. The spinoff is wonderful. Home centres and hardware stores are humming. Helping the construction industry was exactly the right thing to do.

Let us give credit where credit is due when it comes to the reno credit. We really have to wonder how why the Liberal Party would boast about opposing it and voting to defeat the HRTC.

From our side the positives continue. We are doing even more through our economic recovery legislation. I will mention a few of the highlights. We are strengthening pensions by allowing for increased flexibility in how Canadians live, work and retire through reforms to the Canada pension plan, as agreed upon by federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers in their triennial review completed last May. These are reforms that the *Edmonton Journal* approved and referred to as:

—welcome changes...[that] will allow Canadians of a certain age to draw on their Canada Pension Plan benefits and still be allowed to work...the prospect that thousands will be able to discern a horizon when they can not only choose to be gainfully employed but also collect on a pension they paid into for years must come as certain relief.

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We are promoting global growth and cooperation by giving small and low-income countries across the globe a bigger voice at the International Monetary Fund. It is not just about local or national responsibilities, but international responsibilities as well. We will also strengthen our commitment to debt relief by making multilateral debt relief payments statutory.

We are increasing the CBC's borrowing authority to ensure dependability is maintained for public broadcasting.

We are improving government transparency and accountability by requiring federal departments and Crown corporations to prepare and publish quarterly financial reports. We are following through on a commitment the Prime Minister made to Canadians in the 2008 election campaign.

When one hears the term "adscam" or recalls the waste and mismanagement of the gun registry, both notorious legacies of the former Liberal government, it becomes clear why the Liberal Party of Canada and its leader would work toward the defeat of the economic recovery bill. We cannot let that happen.

Canada's economy right now, while clearly being impacted by the most challenging economic crisis of our time since the second world war, is in relatively decent shape when we compare it to the economies of other major industrialized countries, all this as we manage a recession whose causes were outside our borders. We undoubtedly have a responsibility to deal with these. It is not simply a made in Canada problem. This is a global reality.

Of course, we would all be happier without the recession; there is not a person who would not be, but today's Canadians are better off, relatively speaking, than people in just about any other nation on the planet.

We cannot rest on these past achievements. We must build on our strengths and keep the Canadian advantage. Humorist Will Rogers noted that even if we are on the right track, we will get run over if we just sit there. The Liberals may be content to sit, but we intend to run.

Moving Canada forward is exactly what the economic recovery legislation has been doing and will continue to do by building a stronger future for all Canadians. We have to stay the course and complete Canada's economic action plan. We have to make sure we have an entrenched recovery. We have to do what is right for Canadians and what is right for our economy, but if the Liberal leader thinks he has a better idea, then he should simply say so. If he does not like Canada's economic action plan, he should tell Canadians, especially the unemployed and their families, what his plan would mean for them, but if he does not and he will not and he cannot, what is his answer? Wait and see.

Liberals should start asking themselves what is best for the Canadian economy, not the Liberal Party. They should stop the games today and in the future and pass the economic recovery act.

• (1720)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague. We should play back the tapes from 2005 when members of the government were in opposition and they helped engineer the defeat of the Liberal

government. We might play back the tape and realize that the \$42.5 billion deficit that we inherited, we eliminated. And for my NDP friends, 33¢ of every dollar in 1993 was borrowed money.

I am fed up hearing from that side that somehow we did it on the backs of the provinces and the unemployed. That is from members of the government over there who cut the environmental assessment for houses. People had put money in for programs, and suddenly in the middle of the night they were eliminated.

The Conservatives have a \$56 billion deficit and growing. What is your exit strategy? How do you intend to get out of it?

The Deputy Speaker: Again I will remind the member for Richmond Hill to address comments through the Chair, not directly to a member.

The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that we are not going to do what the previous government did. As he stated, and I cannot believe he had the audacity to do so, a government should not take a \$50 billion deficit and then throw it on the backs of someone else. We would not download to the provinces which would then be forced to download on to municipalities. We would not cut 25% off the health and education transfers to the provinces. We would certainly not mortgage the future. We would simply not walk up to someone and suggest that we had cured all the problems of the world and say that it was simple and easy.

Our government has eliminated the deficit when we could have simply put it on someone else's shoulders.

It takes courage to stand up and deal with a problem, and that is what we will continue to do.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to a lot of speeches today and I have been looking for some information about Bill C-51.

I have yet to find anybody other than maybe one speaker all day who has talked about drought relief for livestock owners, which is part of Bill C-51.

I have heard maybe only one speaker all day talk about the revenue-sharing agreement with Nova Scotia, which includes a \$175 million payment, which is part of Bill C-51.

I have heard only one or two speakers all day talk about the first-time home buyers' tax credit and more so the home renovation tax credit program.

I am just wondering why we cannot confine our questions and speeches to the subject at hand, which is Bill C-51.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I actually agree with my hon. colleague. The regretful thing is I had only 10 minutes. I thought we would have had at least 20 or more to speak to this legislation.

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Bill C-51 and all of the implications of such are comprehensive. They cover almost every segment and aspect of the economy from one end to the other, whether it is in Nova Scotia, of whether it is our agricultural producers. Everybody is going to be impacted by this.

I am actually blown away that the Liberal opposition could suggest that this legislation is not important.

Here is the thing that really confuses me. The Liberal leader suggested that after the election he would pass the bill, yet we are sitting here waiting for an election that the Liberals have on their minds. If the bill is good enough to pass after an election, why is it not good enough to pass before an election? Why delay the income and those dollars going out to all of the people who desperately need them in all the fields, from agriculture to environment, to social needs, to farmers, to small businesses, to the regular mom and pop.

The member's point is well taken. The focus should definitely not be on five, 10 or 20 years ago, but on the impact of Bill C-51 today on every Canadian.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have to talk about Bill C-51 and also talk about the implications if it is not passed.

This is a minority government. I heard a great man once say that we can “get by with a little help from our friends”. It is important that we work together.

My colleague pointed out that the Liberals are not talking to anyone. We know they are not talking to each other. We saw that with the member for Bourassa in Quebec and the weakness of his leader in refusing to discipline him.

I want to ask my colleague why the Liberals do not listen to Canadians. Canadians clearly do not want an election. They would like the Liberals to support our government and get on with the economy and with fighting this recession. Why are they not listening to Canadians?

•(1725)

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I could maybe borrow just a few words from the same rendition that my colleague mentioned and just say *Let It Be*. Let us get this legislation passed so it can be effective.

I, like most of my colleagues on at least this side of the House, talk to constituents. I ask them what they want and what they need. How can we get the stimulus in place? Are they ready? Can we implement this?

We have built up a tremendous level of cooperation municipally, provincially and federally. We are moving forward in partnership across this country. It is just unfortunate that my Liberal colleagues cannot—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would ask hon. members for their cooperation in allowing the Speaker to hear the questions and comments.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.
[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-51.

This bill implements the home renovation tax credit, a measure inspired by the proposals in the two plans the Bloc Québécois proposed to this House.

Bill C-51 introduces a first time homebuyers' tax credit, a measure inspired by the Bloc Québécois' most recent election platform. That is why we support this bill.

Bill C-51 implements Canada's international commitments to the International Monetary Fund, which were signed in 2008.

Bill C-51 amends the Canada pension plan, from which Quebec is excluded, based on consultations with the provinces involved.

Bill C-51 acts on the findings of a joint expert panel made up of representatives of Nova Scotia and the federal government to resolve litigation between the parties that has been outstanding since 1984, as an NDP member said here in the House.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill. We will not be like the Liberals, who voted for this budget even though they were supposedly against it and who vote against measures they agree with. Logically, we will support our proposals in these budget measures and vote in favour of this bill.

The Bloc Québécois supports the measures in this bill, which is not at all to say that it has confidence in this government. The federal government's overall plan to tackle the recession is not good enough and misses the mark. We have criticized it many times in this House. That is why we opposed the budget that was tabled in the House. However, because the measures in Bill C-51 are acceptable to Quebec, the Bloc Québécois, true to its responsible attitude and its mission to defend Quebecers' interests, will support this bill. We always work to defend the interests of Quebecers.

Although the measures in this bill may be a small step forward, the Conservative government still does not have an environmental plan with a 21st century vision, and its record on economic issues is terrible. I would like to focus on this matter for a few minutes.

The Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, deliberately ignore the needs of Quebec and its citizens. These Canadian parties make their decisions in Calgary or Toronto, to protect their interests, even when they conflict with the interests of Quebec.

I am thinking, for example, of struggling economic sectors like the forestry industry and the manufacturing sector, which are not receiving the same handouts that are being given to Ontario's auto industry and western oil companies. Yet the Conservative and Liberal members from Quebec supported the last budget, which went against the needs and interests of Quebecers.

Regarding the budget presented in this House, I am also thinking of the thousands of workers affected by the recession who will not receive employment insurance and who cannot have greater access to the system, even though they worked for many weeks. Over 50% of people who work do not have access to the employment insurance system.

I am thinking of our seniors, who are still being shortchanged by the federal government and its guaranteed income supplement.

Government Orders

I am thinking of the fight against greenhouse gases, which, in any case, must not harm the big oil companies, even though it prevents Quebec from properly equipping itself to move forward in the economy of the 21st century, the post-petroleum economy. My colleague from Brome—Missisquoi, a passionate environmentalist, often talks about this in his speeches.

• (1730)

There is nothing in this budget to support an economy based on sustainable development, to ensure that all Quebecers and Canadians, and everyone in the world, have a better and healthier environment.

The government's plan to pay down the federal deficit did not go over well in Quebec. The government needs to find good ways to eliminate the federal deficit, without making the lower and middle classes pay. The federal government is racking up a deficit yet again, and the Conservatives and Liberals are not telling people what they plan on doing to bring back a balanced budget. In fact, just like the Liberals before them, the Conservatives promised not to increase taxes. But, just like the Liberals, they decided to secretly increase employment insurance contributions to make workers pay for the deficit. The Conservative government plans on taking more than \$18.9 billion from the EI fund between 2012 and 2015. It is shameful to be stealing that money from the unemployed, from the least fortunate, the most vulnerable people in this country. It is shocking to make these people and middle-class people pay, while banks, big oil companies and the privileged keep getting richer, since they avoid paying taxes by using tax havens. Banks can save more than \$2 billion a year by using tax havens. Nothing is being done to stop this.

What can we say about the measures implemented by Ottawa to save the big oil companies \$9 billion over the next three years? They are scandalous.

The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-51. However, I say in all sincerity that our support for this government is tenuous. The Bloc Québécois rejects the Liberal-Conservative approach to deficit reduction that takes aim at the middle class, the disadvantaged and Quebec while protecting the privileged. The Bloc Québécois is proposing a plan to cut the deficit that, in the end, would result in an annual cushion of \$16 billion and that would not be achieved at the expense of Quebec's middle class.

First, the Bloc plan proposes to reduce expenditures without eliminating a single program, unlike what the Liberals did in the 1990s. Their cuts to health and education transfers left Quebecers high and dry. We do not want that to be done in this House again.

The federal government has lost control over its bureaucratic expenditures and so, through attrition, it could reduce the size of its public service. Between 1980 and 1998, the federal government's operating expenses rose by 74%.

Finally, the Bloc Québécois proposes to increase taxes for big oil companies, corporations and banks. Military expenditures should be scaled back slightly and the focus should finally be placed on the people who have lost their jobs and on economic recovery, support for the forestry sector, which is in crisis in Quebec, and support for the manufacturing sector. We have to move towards sustainable

development, a greener economy and more investment in this type of economy. As for the infrastructure programs proposed by the Conservatives, that money must go to the ridings. As we know, under the plan recently introduced by the Conservative Party, there is still a lot of money that has to get to our ridings in order to upgrade our infrastructure.

• (1735)

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for his wonderful speech on this bill.

I have a question for him. Earlier, there was some kind of strange misunderstanding between the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois, where we were accused of being against support for the automotive industry. That is not at all the case. We never said we were against it; we said we also wanted support for the forestry industry.

The member mentioned a number of Bloc proposals. I would like him to clear things up. The government said that we never contribute anything. But it seems to me that we introduced the renovation idea. I would like the member to confirm that the Conservatives's ideas came from the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

Of course we are not against investing in the automotive industry, because Quebec manufactures some of these car parts. There are jobs in the automotive industry.

But we are critical of the lack of support for the forestry and manufacturing sectors in Quebec, because a number of jobs have been lost. That is what we are talking about. In response to the member that, yes, we in the Bloc Québécois support assistance for the automotive industry. We are not against that, but we want money for the forestry industry.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question. I would like to thank him for supporting the bill, which is the right thing to do, but I would like to raise a few points.

Many of the people who have spoken today have talked about the same thing: a proposed surtax on the wealthy. If I understand correctly, Pauline Marois, Blanchet, Desmarais, Beaudoin and Jacques Parizeau are among the wealthy people in my province.

I am trying to understand how he would go about collecting that extra cash from the wealthy. I have named only five or six of them. Does he think that the government should take these people's fortunes and put the money into the economy, all the while ensuring that these same people, who are the ones we all look up to after all, do not end up paupers the next day? That is what I would like to know: is he ready to bleed them before others?

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, I understand why the member opposite does not get the Bloc's proposal on this issue. Members of right-wing political parties like his are not very sensitive to the disadvantaged and the unemployed. They proved that in the past with their reluctance to improve the employment insurance system.

We proposed that people earning over \$150,000 should pay a 1% surtax. Instead of attacking society's most vulnerable, the poor and the unemployed, we want some members of the House and other people with high incomes to participate in the collective deficit reduction effort. I can see how that might clash with the member opposite's ideology.

• (1740)

[English]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague this. Does he not think that one of the central responsibilities of a federal government is to control the public purse? Does he not think that the government has lost control over the public purse and over one of its primary responsibilities?

It was not a result of an omission. It was a result of its direct actions to overspend and create a massive imbalance by lowering taxes while increasing spending at two and a half times the rate of GDP, thus causing a structural deficit in the country today.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, we no longer have confidence in this government.

Nonetheless, the Bloc Québécois is a responsible party and Bill C-51 contains proposals that the Bloc Québécois itself made. I gave the example of the home renovations. It is for that reason that we are supporting Bill C-51.

However, as we have said in the House before, it is clear that the Conservative government has done very little to support our workers during the economic crisis in the past few months.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to say very briefly that today the NDP issued a press release as a result of a vote that took place at committee. In that press release we made an error and spoke about the vote itself which of course we should not have done because it was an in camera meeting. I have advised my colleagues in terms of the government House leader and the other House leaders, and have issued an apology for that.

However, I did want to come into the House to let the members know that the press release that the NDP sent out that did speak about the vote at the in camera committee this morning was issued in error and we certainly apologize to all members because we realize that this is something that should not be done.

Private Members' Business

Therefore, I would just like to be very up front with members of the House. There was no intention to undermine the committee, its work or what happens in camera. It was done in error and I wish to apologize on behalf of the NDP that that happened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 5:41 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

FIRST NATIONS CADET PROGRAM

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 271

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should examine First Nations cadet programs and develop a plan to facilitate, promote and help monitor First Nations community cadet programs across Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell you how excited and pleased I am to present Motion No. 271 to my colleagues here in the House of Commons.

I know the motion was just read, but so that my colleagues who are just coming into the House will know what it is we are debating I will read it again:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should examine First Nations cadet programs and develop a plan to facilitate, promote and help monitor First Nations community cadet programs across Canada.

My purpose in putting forward this motion is to bring to the attention of the House a unique and special community cadet program that is helping to bring a positive choice to the youth of the four bands of Hobbema, all the while stemming the tide of violence and the spread of gang recruitment that are plaguing those reserves.

Hobbema is located about 60 kilometres south of Edmonton with a population of approximately 13,000. The four Cree bands of Hobbema consist of the Samson Nation, Louis Bull Band, Ermine-skin and Montana Bands.

Together, across these bands, high unemployment, family breakdown, and the rise of the drug culture have destabilized this once proud oil-rich community. Hobbema has been described as a very dangerous, unpredictable and unstable first nations community, plagued with crime, drug abuse, graffiti, school bullying, gang association and violence. Because some of the residents live in constant fear, it is very difficult to remove the negative criminal element or to reduce the violence.

In 2005 and 2006 there were over 150 drive-by shootings and other gun-related incidents in Hobbema. Thirteen gangs operated openly on the reserve and actively recruited young people. Age was not a deterrent for enticing children under 12 to join a gang, wear gang colours and show their allegiance. They were asked to commit felonies because gangs can exploit youngsters and the youth that are there with the protection that is afforded to them under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Private Members' Business

With more than half of Hobbema's population under the age of 18, RCMP Constable Richard Huculiak recognized that the young people needed an option, so he started the Hobbema community cadet corps. They held their inaugural meeting under the leadership of Constable Huculiak on November 22, 2005. Instead of the free drugs and the status that the gangs were offering, the Hobbema community cadet corps offered an alternative, a chance to learn new skills, to make new friends, and to have new rewarding positive experiences.

Here is what their mission statements says:

Preparing today's youth to be tomorrow's leaders by providing positive social development, leadership and communication skills in a disciplined and respected Aboriginal community cadet program by culturally sensitive members of the Hobbema community.

Within its first year over 800 young people between the ages of 5 and 18 from each of the four bands signed up for this program. This brought an integration of young people, the likes of which had never been seen before.

Today over 1,050 cadets have registered in this program. There are 65 registered cadet instructors. There is one Hobbema RCMP community cadet corps program coordinator, which is Constable Huculiak, and one RCMP provincial youth cadet program manager, which is Sergeant Mark A. Linnell, five parent volunteers, and three senior cadets who recently turned 18 and are waiting to be trained as adult cadet instructors.

With over 1,000 participants this remarkable community cadet corps is the largest native cadet program in Alberta, and most likely the world. The phenomenal growth and success of the Hobbema cadet program is attributable to the commitment of the organizers and of course the cadets who come routinely. Hobbema RCMP Constable Richard Huculiak describes the program with the following words:

What we offer is a place to build relationships with others. A group of friends you can rally around to stay out of trouble together.

The program that started with four separate bands has grown into a collective unit that now solves problems as a team in the spirit of tolerance and patience. An added plus is that some of the parents and elders have also begun associating and working together.

• (1745)

The activities are specifically tailored to the needs and concerns of native reserve youth, and there is a strong emphasis on native culture, sports and of course a healthy lifestyle. It is closely associated with schools. As a matter of fact, the fundamental rule for becoming a Hobbema community cadet is that anybody participating in cadets must be attending full-time school, including correspondence, home-schooling, public school and alternate schools. As a result, school attendance has improved and there are fewer bullying issues, fights and other complaints on school properties.

This incentive based program has proven to be an effective crime prevention initiative that draws from the same age group that is targeted so frequently by the gangs. The program provides a safe environment where the young people can participate in structured, goal oriented activities as an alternative to becoming involved in the gang lifestyle. It is an important step in engaging young people in a

positive, life-enhancing experience that will help them make the right choices for their future.

The Hobbema cadets are discovering that there is an alternative to gangs, drugs and violence. The youth crime rate has dropped significantly, thanks to the influence of the Cadet Corps. Everywhere they go, they are greeted enthusiastically by crowds. The cadets are immediately recognizable by their distinctive uniforms whenever they are called upon to demonstrate their drills at public events or to march in a parade.

They even received a standing ovation at the 2007 Models of Youth Excellence Provincial Congress in Toronto following the screening of the documentary *Shades of Blue*, which tracked their remarkable progress to that point.

With new-found confidence, these young people are on the road to becoming responsible future leaders who will ensure that the traditions and values of their heritage are upheld in a safe and vibrant community. Every effort is made to help the cadets with career planning by partnering with post-secondary institutions and other educational resources.

Government agencies and the private sector have come on board to offer information and to scout for potential future employees. Here are just a couple of examples of how cadets have used the program to set and achieve their own personal goals.

Teddi Baptiste Saddleback joined the Montana Community Cadet Corps in 2006 and left as a senior cadet in 2008 at the age of 18. Teddi worked as a summer RCMP student in 2008 and attended NorQuest College in Edmonton in the aboriginal policing program. She is now a full-time employee of Correctional Services Canada and is presently working in Hobbema at the Pe Sakastew Healing Lodge. Teddi continues to volunteer her time to the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program as a mentor and role model, and she assists with the Correctional Services Canada employment recruiting team.

Tyrone Cattleman joined the Montana Community Cadet Corps in 2006, and by the time he moved on two years later, he was to join the Canadian armed forces' Bold Eagle program. He is presently serving as a private in the Canadian armed forces reserves in Red Deer, Alberta. Tyrone is the communications and public relations liaison officer between the Canadian armed forces reserves in and around Red Deer and the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program.

Trent Young joined the Ermineskin Community Cadet Corps in 2005 and presently is a senior cadet with the leadership position of captain. Trent has been assigned the responsibility of commanding the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program with Sergeant Mark Linnell. Trent has prepared himself for a leadership position with the Ermineskin chief and council, to serve the community of Ermineskin and to support the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program. He has travelled across Canada and to Jamaica to promote and support the successful Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program. He was also given the rank of captain by the Jamaica Police National Inter-School Brigade Cadets when he was in Jamaica as part of an exchange. I would like to talk about that exchange that just happened recently.

Private Members' Business

Earlier this year, the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps accepted an invitation from the Jamaica Police National Inter-School Brigade Cadets to participate in its ninth anniversary, which was in April. Instead of a two week vacation in Spanish Town, Jamaica, 20 cadets met people who live in shacks made of scrap metal sheeting, where children had to sleep on bare cement. It was a real eye-opener for those cadets. As a matter of fact, 14-year-old Dean Bruno-Kelln was amazed to discover that "Hobbema would be like the cleanest city by comparison". Those are strong words.

Their differences aside, both groups bonded over the shared goal of escaping gangs and the violence that plagues their respective communities. The Hobbema cadets then invited their international counterparts to visit Alberta in August. This would not have been possible without the generous help from Rob and Rose Paterson of the Ponoka Travel agency.

In addition to the rigours of the itinerary, they had the honour of meeting Canada's Minister of Public Safety.

Both the trip to Jamaica and the visit to Alberta became CBC documentaries. I hope many of my colleagues had an opportunity to watch the second installment of that documentary that aired just this past Sunday night. I would like to thank the CBC for its interest, and all the media, frankly, with the numerous articles that have been printed and the numerous reports that have been followed up on. The media's interest in this wonderful, positive story coming out of Hobbema cannot be understated.

• (1750)

If you had seen the show, Mr. Speaker, you would have had an opportunity to see the program at work and the challenges facing the cadets and the organizers. The Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program is considered to be the best police crime prevention and reduction initiative developed and implemented in Hobbema in the past 10 years that is still effective, efficient, accepted and active.

At their twice weekly meetings that are held at a warehouse on the Samson Band site, the cadets receive official recognition of their achievements through the use of badges and ranks. I have been to a couple of the ceremonies where the ranks have been handed out, the promotions have been handed out and the certificates, and to see the smile on the faces of these young people as they are promoted and gaining that confidence, I cannot say how wonderful that experience is and it is creating such a positive environment.

Although it is categorized as a program, there are no written manuals, policies or procedures that support the program. Despite the lack of an annual budget or paid positions, this program has earned the Hobbema cadets accolades and has sparked international interest. It may not be the panacea to solve all of the problems but it is a concept that has proven to be successful and can serve as a model for other troubled communities.

Most youth or crime prevention programs that were offered in Hobbema over the past 10 years lasted only from six months to a year and eventually failed. Studies have shown that gangs often target aboriginal youth as a means to increase their membership and to expand their territory. The gangs have not left town and the violence still exists on the reserve today but this and other initiatives stemming from the Samson Cree Nation safe community task force

are making a difference. As a matter of fact, I mentioned earlier in my speech that there were 13 gangs operating. I believe that has now been reduced to eight gangs operating in that territory. So there is some positive take-back in that community and everyone involved should be congratulated.

One of the keys is to target programs for youth who are at risk and what we are trying to do through this program is reduce crime. I urge our government to get involved and to assist this extraordinary program and to develop a plan to facilitate, promote and help monitor first nations community cadet programs rights across our country where those programs are wanted.

We often say that our children are our future and it is incumbent upon us to make every effort and to take every step possible to prepare them for the future so they can become the future leaders of tomorrow.

I would like to thank Sergeant Mark Linnell who is back home in Hobbema, Constable Richard Huculiak and Noreen Buffalo who is president of the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps Program Society. They are with us today here in Ottawa donating much of their time to the cadet program. The program would not exist or be so successful without their contribution and the help of other volunteers who work with cadets.

I especially want to thank Brian Makinaw, Salty Lee, David Hucilak, Deanna Roasting and Deb Swanson for their commitment and leadership of the cadet program. The countless hours of time and their constant involvement speak to their passion for making the cadet program a success for all who participate.

I want to thank and encourage the members and elders of the four Hobbema bands for their support to this date and their continued support of this worthwhile grassroots initiative.

I want to thank all of the sponsors and donors to this program. Their willingness to support these young people demonstrates to me that the community is behind this cadet initiative and I hope they will continue to support the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program.

I want to strongly encourage the chiefs, the elders, the parents, sponsors, surrounding communities and the RCMP to work with the cadet program organizers to ensure it continues and succeeds.

I ask our government to get involved by establishing a monitoring plan and to promote the concept of the community cadet corps on other first nations reserves and in troubled areas across our country.

Lastly, I want to thank all of the wonderful young people who participate in this program. They are my inspiration for moving this motion today. I have met too many of them to name every one of them but I do want to acknowledge some of the cadets I have come to know: Trent Young, Elishia Saddleback, Braylene Saddleback, Daniel Baptiste, Dean Bruno-Kelln and Telford Roasting. They and all their fellow cadets are excellent ambassadors of their community, their cadet program, their Cree culture and their the country. I am so very proud of all of them, as are many fellow Canadians. I know they will continue to make a positive choice not only for themselves but also for their fellow citizens.

Private Members' Business

I want to encourage all members of the House to give serious consideration to this motion and I look forward to their positive responses and questions for Motion No. 271.

• (1755)

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of the House, I thank the member for bringing this private member's bill forward. I had the privilege, along with some of my colleagues, to see that program a few nights ago.

I shared that with my wife, who is from Spanish Town. Having taught in Spanish Town and the area myself many years ago, I was taken by the spirituality that was part of that visit from the Hobbema cadet group down to Jamaica and then when they came back to Alberta. It was a moving commentary on the capacity that exists within those young people, both from Jamaica and from Hobbema. It offers hope to all of us that those young people will make a difference.

The member has talked about a monitoring plan. Would it not be more important that resources be provided? Could he outline the kind of resources that we as a federal government, acting in concert with the community, could provide that will continue to make that real difference in those communities?

• (1800)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for those positive comments and his personal experiences as they relate to the exchange that just happened.

I chose the words in the motion very carefully. I know that the word "monitoring" may seem a little nebulous, but the member knows full well that when a private member's bill is brought forward that asks for money, it usually is something that needs to be taken into consideration

Of course, resources are always needed. Resources are needed for uniforms. Resources are needed to help with the administration and to ensure the website keeps operating. Resources are needed to hire people to come in and provide counselling and other forms of mentoring that are beyond the scope and grasp right now of the people who are able to keep this thing running on the wings of angels. It is absolutely incredible what these two RCMP officers and the few members of the community have done. They come out in small numbers but their dedication, commitment and love for the kids in Hobbema is inspiring.

There is such positive news coming out of this community that I had to share it with the House. The resources are there. We do not need a ton of resources but the right amount of resources coming into that community would provide an environment where that program could continue to blossom and succeed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member. I find this motion to be very interesting and I think it should be adopted by this House quickly. I will come back to that in a moment.

However, even if a motion is adopted, in order for it to mean something in time, more is needed. I will come back in a few minutes with the notes I prepared for my speech.

I would like the hon. member to tell us about the age of the participants. Are they young people? What age group are they in? Is there an age limit? Is this open to men and women equally? How does a cadet corps work in everyday life in a community like Wetaskiwin, for instance, or in any community?

I would like to know whether the hon. member can elaborate on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I am very encouraged by my colleague's comments because it appears that there will be support, particularly from his side of the House, on this very important motion.

With regard to the current program that I am talking about in Hobbema, the ages are 5 to 18. One of the first people I met was a young lady who I mentioned in my speech, so it is open to males and females. Braylene Saddleback could not have been much taller than about three feet five inches and yet here she was in her uniform, all smiles about the opportunities that she had to participate in this program. Of course, she is still very active and involved and is on their drill team.

The program offers all kinds of opportunities for young people, and it is not restricted. As I mentioned in my notes, there are no specific program manuals or policies. It is a grassroots initiative. What the people in the community put into the program is what they get out of it.

What is needed are the resources, the funding, the initiative and the drive from public safety and the community to keep these things going. This program is so successful because it is a grassroots initiative. It is not a top-down approach but a bottom-up approach, which is what makes it successful.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Wetaskiwin for this particular motion.

I hope I got the name right. If I did not, I will apologize to the aboriginal people, first and foremost, in the community and also to the member.

I know from the hon. member's speech that the motion was inspired by the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps. I want to thank the member for doing something in this House that is rarely done; that is, he put faces and names to what the motion means. He made us feel something in this House about how important a motion can be, in this particular case, to many aboriginal youth and their families. I believe in that way, the motion can inspire other aboriginal youth across this country and can inspire other non-aboriginal youth across this country.

Private Members' Business

I was also struck, as were many of our colleagues, by the documentary that was shown on the CBC. Again, we do not all have the benefit of being in these communities and seeing things firsthand, but the CBC gave us an insight into what this program is about. Again, it showed us the faces, and it allowed us to hear their voices and the excitement, the hope, the inspiration that a program like this can mean for so many people. It inspires something in them to do something better. It inspires, I believe, Canadians generally when they watch a show like this. So many times when we talk about aboriginal communities, all we ever hear are the bad stories, the things that are going wrong, and that becomes in itself sort of a prophecy that repeats itself over and over again.

So, it was fantastic to see this documentary which talked about something that is good and something that raises up people instead of bringing them down.

The Hobbema Community Cadet Corps has attracted participants from several of the Cree first nations in north-central Alberta. Like other cadet programs, it is meant to build leadership and teamwork skills and boost self-esteem. It is meant to develop a sense of discipline and hone decision making and self-confidence.

Who cannot be captivated by Trent Young, the captain who was featured in this particular story, and the scene where he put his arms around one of the RCMP officers and said he was the closest person to a father he had ever had? Those types of images kind of make us well up a bit inside. I commend Trent Young and the other participants of this program.

There is also an important physical education component and a holistic approach to the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps. I offer my congratulations to the RCMP officers who have spearheaded the cadet movement in Hobbema. It is a great example of community policing and of the RCMP's commitment to community building. I believe that many of us who live in small, remote communities can often see how integral the RCMP are to our communities, how they go out in communities like Hopedale, an Inuit community on the north coast of Labrador, and help build an outdoor rink with the youth, to give them something positive to do in their lives.

When I look at the RCMP officers who shaved their heads—and certainly if I were one, I would not need to do that—for cancer research and to find a cure for cancer. That is a real example of the RCMP getting involved in our communities. It is a real example of community policing.

In pursuing the aims of this motion, there are other examples of similar movements that we can look to. I think, for example, of the cadets program administered by the Department of National Defence.

When I use these examples, I want the House to know that I take nothing away from the uniqueness of that particular cadet program, because some of its uniqueness has to do with how it grew from the people themselves and those who participated in it and the way it came about; not, as the member opposite has said, from the top down, but from the bottom up.

We can use examples like the air, army and sea cadet programs for young people aged 12 to 18. They are programs that have long been successful. They are popular in my riding of Labrador and in many

others around the country. Many of these youth proudly go about their duties. They are in our parades and in our Remembrance Day ceremonies, and many of our youth look up to them. Again, they set a positive example.

• (1805)

Another very successful and popular program similar in nature and intent to the cadets program is the Junior Canadian Rangers. The JCR program was launched in 1996 with local groups, led by members of the Canadian Rangers and the Canadian Forces.

There are over 100 communities across Canada that participate in the JCR program, which are organized into five Canadian Rangers patrol groups. There are 10 JCR patrols in my riding of Labrador alone, with participation by aboriginal and non-aboriginal youth alike. The program is very popular in rural, northern and aboriginal communities, offering recreational opportunities and life skills development that might otherwise not be available.

These patrols in Labrador have won repeated recognition at regional and national events. Again, recognition that people themselves gain is important, but sometimes reinforcement from the outside is also important.

The Junior Canadian Rangers also participate in many community events including local festivals and Remembrance Day celebrations. I saw the Hobbema cadets participate in many community events. They had, for instance, a pow-wow and they had their brothers up from Jamaica. We saw the cultural exchange. They were inspiring people not only within their own community but also from other countries. The reach, the breadth and the depth this program has had are remarkable.

I have seen a big difference in the self-esteem and leadership skills of many youth in Labrador communities who participate in programs like the cadets and the Junior Canadian Rangers. After watching CBC reports on the program in Hobbema, I recognize the same transformation. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I congratulate the cadets and their leaders for what they have achieved and join in the recognition that they have received in Canada and abroad.

One key difference between the Hobbema program and others I have mentioned today is that the cadets and the Junior Canadian Rangers programs are formal programs with official support from the Canadian Forces and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. At the same time, they enjoy grassroots and community support.

However, the Hobbema program is truly being built from the grassroots up. Without interfering in that process, as I said earlier, I challenge the government to look at offering formal support to the community cadet corps in Hobbema or other communities and others who would emulate such an undertaking.

The experiences of the army, sea and air cadets and the Junior Canadian Rangers show the value of such programs to young people and their communities. The motion calls for monitoring and promotion. Given the very real benefit of youth programs of this type, perhaps the government should be willing to go further.

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I think of the value with regard to crime reduction, combating gang and other crimes and violence. There may be lessons here and opportunities for first nations or urban aboriginal communities that are facing similar challenges. There is a health promotion component for all three aspects of health: physical, mental and social.

There are benefits as well that come from preventing alcohol and drug abuse. Though perhaps hard to quantify, the health benefits alone to aboriginal communities probably justify the modest cost of building cadet or other youth programs. Programs like these are instrumental in forming the next generation of leaders. We have already seen the benefits from the cadets and the JCR programs and now from the Hobbema program itself.

I would encourage youth in the Hobbema program to continue sharing their stories and experiences with other Canadians, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, as they may inspire similar efforts elsewhere in the country.

Again, I congratulate Hobbema and the path that so many of its youth have chosen for themselves, and I encourage them to lead others in Hobbema elsewhere along the same journey. I look forward to supporting this motion.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is rare that we see such a thing in this House. In fact, it is not even a debate, given that a motion like the one moved by my colleague from Wetaskiwin is extremely important, when it comes to things that really affect first nations people today, particularly, the lack of leadership, lack of academic success, poverty, alcohol, drugs and violence in the communities. I strongly suggested—and I think my suggestion will be adopted—that the Bloc Québécois support our colleague's motion. I am more or less convinced that the motion will be adopted by the entire House. I think the motion will be unanimously adopted, since it is so very important.

If I may humbly say so in this House, I would really like to see this motion, if it is adopted—which I do not doubt for a second—proceed through all the stages and its progress monitored in the years to come. We can adopt all the motions we like in this House, but if the government does not follow through on them, they are of no use. We must ensure that this motion, which will be adopted, is referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, so we can ensure that it is followed up on and that the necessary measures are established so that the example set by the Hobbema cadets can be followed.

There are all kinds of examples. I listened carefully to my colleague from Labrador, who gave a remarkable speech. I think that is precisely the situation. My colleague who moved this motion also gave an excellent description of the situation. I would like to talk briefly about Quebec, since I know it well, and there are examples of things that are working in various communities.

I would like to take a minute or two, if I may, to explain what is happening in Nunavik. There is a hockey player in Nunavik named Joé Juneau. Joé Juneau is an excellent hockey player who played in the NHL. He has met with the mayors of the Inuit communities in northern Quebec and, with them, has set up a program to encourage

young people to go to school and complete their education. He has also developed a hockey program. Members may say that I am off topic, but there is a connection with the cadet corps, because in order to train tomorrow's leaders, aboriginal communities have to take ownership of the process. The initiatives have to come from these communities, because anything that is parachuted in from above will not succeed. I have sat on the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee for three years, and every time a great program is implemented in aboriginal communities, it does not succeed if the communities do not support or take part in it or if they have not developed it. This happens all the time.

I do not know whether the cadet program, which this motion concerns, would be adaptable across Canada. I do not agree with the idea of taking something that works well in one community and applying it everywhere, because it will not necessarily work. However, the Hobbema cadet program might be an extremely interesting model. I think we could at least find a way to extend these concepts to aboriginal communities so that they can adapt them and develop programs such as a cadet corps, patrols or an organization that reflects what is proposed in the motion.

• (1815)

I am wondering about something, as is the Bloc Québécois. It is obvious to me that this is a successful model but we cannot impose it throughout Canada. It is a good model, but it has to be adapted.

We must find a way to encourage communities to adopt or adapt this model for the youth in their communities. To this end, I strongly suggest, once the motion has been adopted, that the leaders of the Hobbema cadet corps visit the communities that would like to start up this type of cadet corps.

For example, I was talking about hockey and our youth. Similar situations can be found throughout Canada. However, in Quebec, hockey has been used to engage aboriginal youth and develop their skills. If you want to play hockey for a long time, you have to get to sleep early, not drink too much and avoid violence. That is a way of breaking up gangs. I can give examples in aboriginal communities in Abitibi—Témiscamingue where a number of hockey teams have been established with the same principle as the cadets mentioned by my colleague in this House.

Look at what happened in Nunavik in 2006 when the Kativik school board, the Kativik regional government and the Makivik Corporation launched the Nunavik youth hockey development program. The idea came from Joé Juneau, a former NHL player, and the goal was to put education first and use hockey to encourage aboriginal youth to stay in school.

The program had an extremely positive impact on reducing crime and improving academic performance. Young people stayed in school and did not drop out. The program was designed to support community development. We could spend a lot of time talking about this special program for Inuit youth.

The Malietenam website provides information about the Kupaniesh program in Malietenam. This is a great program that trains Innu youth to be in and respect nature. However, to take part, students must stay in school and stay away from drugs, alcohol and gangs.

I know that I have almost run out of time, but I want to say that we will support our Conservative Party colleague's motion, and I urge all members to support it.

I hope—we hope—that this motion will be more than just words on paper once the House amends and passes it. I hope that communities will use this motion to create their own cadet corps.

We will find the words, but it is very important for communities to take the idea and adapt it to meet their needs, because God knows that we have to reduce crime and encourage young people to stay in school. I am sure that this program will train the leaders of tomorrow. This motion is commendable, and I hope that the House will pass it.

• (1820)

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of New Democrats and indicate that we support Motion No. 271 put forward by the member for Wetaskiwin.

For people who are listening, the motion we are debating today states:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should examine First Nations cadet programs and develop a plan to facilitate, promote and help monitor First Nations community cadet programs across Canada.

I know other members of the House have talked about how we put motions forward and then sometimes they languish. From what the members have said today, it seems that all parties will support this motion.

My motion in 2007 on Jordan's Principle was unanimously supported in the House of Commons. Although, the speed of implementation has been somewhat glacial, it is being implemented. We have two provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, that have reached some agreement with the federal government around the jurisdictional disputes for aboriginal children. Although it is not implementing the full intent of Jordan's Principle, there is at least some movement. When we know other provinces, like the province of British Columbia, have indicated support in principle.

Therefore, for the member for Wetaskiwin, I know support in the House can signal some move. With the support of all members of the House, we could see some difference made in the lives of youth in their communities.

I want to touch briefly on a couple of points. In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan in the community of Cowichan, the community justice coordinator, Calvin Swustus, has been in touch with my office about the need for support for these types of cadet programs. He has indicated to me that he sees Hobbema as a very good example of being proactive in dealing with some of the potential problems that are occurring with youth.

He has said that these proactive measures will lead to the avoidance of major problems, potential violence in communities,

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that youth will be healthier and have skills, knowledge and new tools to use, that they will also have a better idea of what they want in the future and will have healthier friendships. He sees the cadet program as an opportunity to help provide some support structure for healthier communities.

For people who do not know about Cowichan, the first nations in Cowichan are the largest on reserve first nations band in British Columbia and there is a significant number of youth. As a part of the legacy of residential schools, with poverty, a lack of access to education, a lack of access to adequate housing, we see problems with some of the young people.

The Cowichan people have not been sitting on their hands on this matter. They have been working proactively within their community to look for programs and services that will help youth make better choices with their lives.

One of the programs in place is called "Tribal Journeys". Anyone who was fortunate enough to be present for the North American Indigenous Games saw Tribal Journeys like we have never seen in decades. We saw hundreds of canoes coming into the harbour at Cowichan Bay, paddled by the young people and the elders in their communities. Part of the Tribal Journeys teachings are that the elders provide the teachings as these young people paddle. During the Tribal Journey, young people make a commitment to be free of drug and alcohol.

What happens with these young people, and the elders in Cowichan will often speak about this, is we have to deal with the whole person. We have to deal with the mental, the physical, the emotional and the spiritual. As part of the Tribal Journeys, that is exactly what happens.

I was fortunate enough to paddle one day on the Tribal Journeys this year with some young people. I had nothing but admiration for those who were brave enough to get into this canoe and paddle great distances. These young people are paddling for 10 or 15 days depending on where they come from. One of the elders told me that one of the advantages of being together like this was that the young people were almost a captive audience in this canoe. The elder gets to talk about some of the spiritual significance of the paddle, of the journey. The elder said that they also had an opportunity to talk about the culture, about the language and how important it was for those young people to understand their roots.

That is certainly part of the cadet program in Hobbema. There are elders involved. The young people are exposed to their language, their culture and that grounds them in their sense of who they are and where they come from. It gives them a pride in their history and their ancestors.

• (1825)

I want to refer briefly to the mission statement from Hobbema, because it is important. The mission statement for the Hobbema Community Cadet program is:

PREPARING TODAY'S YOUTH TO BE TOMORROW'S LEADERS BY PROVIDING POSITIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS AND A DISCIPLINED AND RESPECTED ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CADET PROGRAM BY CULTURALLY SENSITIVE MEMBERS OF THE HOBBEMA COMMUNITY.

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The aboriginal affairs critic for the Bloc referenced the fact that programs did not work if they were imposed from outside. This program has been developed by the community, in conjunction with the RCMP, recognizing the important cultural aspects of that community.

Some other members have talked about from where the Hobbema program came. I want to reiterate from the Hobbema website that this program was initiated by the RCMP as a comprehensive crime reduction initiative to disrupt gang activity, drug abuse and associated violence in the Cree First Nations communities of Hobbema, Alberta. This positive crime reduction approach involved a number of enforcement and preventive strategies intended to engage, empower and mobilize the community members against the gang and drug activity.

It goes on to talk about the fact that the increasing gang and drug activities and expected phenomenon when culture, language and a sense of pride in the family, school and community begin to erode. I referenced residential school experiences earlier. We have seen that many young people no longer have their language or their teachings. Their parents, their grandparents and their great grandparents ended up in residential schools where they were punished for speaking their language. They were punished for trying to follow cultural traditions. In my province of British Columbia the potlatch was outlawed. People were put in jail for carrying on the traditions that their ancestors had carried on for thousands of years.

Again, from the website, it says:

One alternative the Hobbema RCMP implemented is the development of the First Nations Community Cadet Corps Program...The cadet activities are specifically tailored to the needs and concerns of the native reserve youth with a strong emphasis on native culture, language, education, sports and a healthy lifestyle. The goals and objectives of the Program are to prepare the youth for future leadership positions and challenges by mentoring the youth through positive attitudes and social development skills provided by culturally sensitive role models.

One of the comments that came up earlier in the House was that it would be great to have support in principle for cadet programs in first nations, and Inuit I would assume, communities from coast to coast to coast, but what is missing is the question of resources. Even in this program there needs to be money found for uniforms, for example, and for other program activities. It is always the fundamental question when we start to talk about programs and services that are to be delivered.

The other aspect is the importance of being proactive. New Democrats have always called for a multi-pronged strategy when we talk about crime reduction. This cadet program is touted as being a tool to look at, encouraging youth into a healthier lifestyle and away from gang activity. Prevention is an absolutely essential part of any approach when we talk about crime reduction.

The cadet program is a valuable asset, but I want to touch upon one other aspect. I think 77 members of the House have friendship centres in their communities. The friendship centres have youth components. There is an urban, multipurpose aboriginal youth centre initiative under the friendship centres. We have found that the program has been delayed in terms of calls for proposals. I urge all members of the House to look for ways to support the cadet programs and to support the youth aspect of the friendship centres. They are vital links in many of the communities.

If we go ahead and pass this important motion from the member for Wetaskiwin, we should also urge the government to provide adequate funding, long-term sustained funding, to ensure these communities have the resources to put this very good program in place.

● (1830)

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the motion before us today.

Effective crime prevention initiatives have been a priority for our government since we were first elected in 2006. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to speak about some of the ways we have been helping young people at risk avoid becoming involved in criminal activities and also talk about funding cadet programs in first nations communities.

Young people present our hope for the future. This is especially true in the case of aboriginal youth, the fastest growing segment of our population and a rapidly expanding pool of in-demand talent.

The first nations population is growing three times faster than the national average, with half of all aboriginal people being under the age of 25. Equipped with the right skills and education these young people can seize new economic development opportunities being created in first nations communities. They can also help to fill the thousands of jobs that are opening up as more and more Canadians reach retirement age.

Unfortunately, too many aboriginal youth currently fall short of their potential. They are more likely than their non-aboriginal peers to be both victims of crime and to be arrested and incarcerated for crime. In fact, they are almost eight times more likely to be in custody than their non-aboriginal counterparts.

Research tells us the most persistent young offenders have a history of abuse or neglect, problems in school, early substance abuse, anti-social behaviour, delinquent peers and inadequate adult supervision. Research also provides solid evidence that crime prevention works with these at-risk youth.

Effective prevention programs have proven to be able to reduce arrests of youth by up to 70%. This is one key reason our Conservative government has taken some very decisive action to strengthen and refocus the national crime prevention strategy.

We have made sure that our programs are targeted, effective and long term. We have also taken steps to ensure that funding for the crime prevention strategy is permanent rather than subject to the sunset provisions which the previous government had put in place.

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Under the previous national crime prevention strategy, funding went largely to initiatives focusing on raising awareness among young people in general, and other projects such as those designed to help community organizations study the extent of delinquency in their area.

This translated into funding that lacked focus and often went to well intentioned but hardly specific enough initiatives. Under the previous crime prevention strategies, permissible funding was often too small and for too short a period of time, thereby limiting the potential for community-based projects to achieve real measurable results.

Today, the national crime prevention strategy has a renewed mission and core activities that provide a sharper focus on crime prevention. Funding is targeted to address high-risk and high-priority crimes, populations and places. Longer term and more intensive projects are now being funded with a view to reducing the likelihood that at-risk persons will offend. Projects to implement direct interventions with vulnerable children, youth and their families are being supported rather than more general awareness campaigns or social activities.

The idea is to help young people at risk to address circumstances or personal characteristics, such as drug, alcohol or other substance abuse, aggressiveness or violence and dysfunction in families, any of which might lead them down the wrong path and into a life of crime.

Our goal is to make sure that we achieve concrete results by supporting evidence-based projects that will help those most at risk achieve their full potential and make smart choices.

Hon. members will know that as part of our effort to strengthen and refocus the strategy, our government set up the northern and aboriginal crime prevention fund where crime rates unfortunately are often three times higher than elsewhere in the country.

The fund supports innovative and culturally sensitive crime prevention practices that reduce offending among at-risk children and youth. It helps to develop tools and resources tailored to aboriginal and northern populations, and to disseminate this knowledge across communities.

Especially important is that it helps to build capacity at the community level to develop or implement culturally sensitive crime prevention practices among aboriginal and northern populations.

How has the government been doing with the new strategy so far?

• (1835)

Between January and September of this year alone, our government has invested nearly \$74.4 million in 46 crime prevention projects across Canada, many of them targeted to helping aboriginal youth. I will talk about just a few.

Our government is investing in a project in Vancouver that provides aboriginal youth between the ages of 12 and 23 with positive alternatives to gang involvement. This initiative is a collaboration between the Vancouver police department and a number of aboriginal organizations.

Our government is also investing in Winnipeg's Circle of Courage project which helps reduce gang violence and criminal activity by

enabling aboriginal participants to learn practical life skills and strengthen their connection to their culture to help protect them from gang influences.

Also, the Seeds of Change Youth Inclusion program in Halifax is helping 14 to 18 year olds at risk of criminal involvement to develop new skills, to help with their education and focus on drug prevention and conflict resolution so young people can increase their social skills and sense of belonging.

The Aboriginal Women's Association of P.E.I.'s program Gathering Together is working to reduce in first nation communities incidents of violent crime and property crime associated with substance abuse. This program involves communities, families, service providers and youth in culturally sensitive activities that develop the skills needed to support effective crime prevention and reduction.

The Government of Canada has already done a lot to keep kids at risk out of trouble, and we are going to do a lot more.

The motion before us today asks the government to examine cadet programs in this regard. I would like to give hon. members a brief background into the Hobbema cadet corps which is active in Alberta, in the constituency of my colleague, the member for Wetaskiwin. This cadet corps is a shining example of such programs at work.

In 2005 the RCMP developed and implemented a cadet corps program for the community of Hobbema. It was conceived as a comprehensive crime reduction measure to educate first nations youth on the dangers of gang activity, drug abuse and the associated violence. The program has been a remarkable success.

The cadet corps program recruits young aboriginal people and advises them on positive choices and alternate ways to overcome the challenges and obstacles that prevent them from moving on in their education, or which serve to frustrate their career goals and opportunities.

In partnership with youth, the community and local police, the program provides culturally sensitive, tailored guidance while instilling discipline and providing experience, all while showing trust and respect to everyone involved. Cadets in this program become role models for their peers and the younger generations in their communities.

I will outline some of the success that this program has already seen.

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School attendance has risen and crime has been significantly reduced in the community as a result of this cadet corps program. The program has received national and international interest from aboriginal, academic and policing communities for its focus on youth empowerment and its corresponding reduction in crime.

The bottom line is that Canadians want us to invest in what works and make sure we get the biggest bang for our buck. That is what our focus will be.

I want to thank and congratulate my colleague from Wetaskiwin for bringing forward the motion which highlights the potential of cadet programs. It clearly dovetails with our government's plans to strengthen crime prevention among youth.

In fact, I am already seeing how such a program could be beneficial in my own riding of Wild Rose, which is home to the Stoney Nakoda reserve.

I am encouraged by the fact that the three bands in Wild Rose have indicated the priorities for their reserves are education and economic development.

This summer our Minister of Indian Affairs announced that a new school will be built in the community of Morley. Our Conservative government is already showing our commitment to assisting first nations in Wild Rose to meet their objectives. But there is still more work that needs to be done.

This weekend I will be doing a ride-along with the Cochrane RCMP's rural section on the Stoney reserve. Unfortunately, the officers of this section report that the level of crime on the reserve is significantly higher than the rest of the area that they cover.

The benefits that are proven to flow from the establishment of a cadet corps would be welcome in this community. I would dearly love to see them realized for my young constituents in Morley and on the Stoney Nakoda reserve. Most important, they are benefits that would be generated by the first nations community itself, and on its terms.

Based on the early promise of projects such as those in Hobbema, I am optimistic that we will find lasting solutions to youth crime problems, and in the process, continue to build safer communities for Canadians.

I encourage all hon. members to support this initiative.

● (1840)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 30, my Liberal colleague, the member for Guelph, and I asked the Minister of Finance whether or not the promised Canadian secured credit facility would be open on May 1 as the Conservative government had promised.

It had made the announcement in December 2008. At that point, it said that it would be up and running for business by May 1, 2009. Five months later, on April 30, we asked whether or not it was going to be on schedule for May 1. The minister refused to respond. Instead, he tried to poke fun at the Liberals, et cetera.

On May 9, one week after the deadline that the government had set for itself, the minister welcomed the rollout of the credit facility. Being one week late may not be a major concern, but the government did not even have the moral courage to state on April 30 that the facility would be rolled out, but not until May 9, 2009, one week late.

When the government rolled it out on May 9, the minister announced that the government would purchase up to \$12 billion in asset-backed securities backed by loans on vehicles and equipment. This is important to Liberals and to many Canadians because our car dealers need credit to sell their vehicles and consumers need credit to purchase or lease vehicles.

I would simply like to ask the parliamentary secretary how much of the \$12 billion that the government said it would purchase in asset-backed securities backed by loans on vehicles and equipment has actually been spent.

● (1845)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a disappointing speech that was by the Liberal member. Nowhere in her lengthy speech did she apologize to the auto workers and their families. Nowhere did she say "sorry" to the unemployed men and women across this country, nor did she admit that the Liberals were wrong. She did not admit this to the entrepreneurs, whether small or large, who are the backbone of our economy.

What is even more sad is that the Liberal member does not even know what she and her leader have done wrong. She does not believe that threatening to throw Canada into an unnecessary election only to quench the Liberals' thirst for power is bad and deplorable as well.

She ignores small businesses, as voiced by Canadian Federation of Independent Business president and CEO Catherine Swift, who in a television interview last week pleaded for the Liberal madness to end. She remarked, "All we need is a stupid election to put things right back in the tank. Elections do not produce certainty. I think with the economy turning right now, though, this is a bad time to have an election".

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While the member demands an election and an end to Parliament, she has the audacity to claim to be interested in the Canadian secured credit facility, or as we refer to it, the CSCF. I will give the House an update, not for her but for those Canadians and members who are actually interested in making Parliament work.

The CSCF is an initiative included in Canada's economic action plan designed to support the financing of vehicles and equipment to stimulate private lending. Indications to date are that this objective is being achieved. The cost and availability of funding for vehicle and equipment sales has improved since the CSCF has been made available.

For example, in June, Ford Credit Canada was able to issue \$600 million in ABS in the public markets in Canada without using the secured credit facility, the first such asset-backed security issue since 2007. It is reported that Ford also raised more than \$3 billion in private placements over the summer months.

On September 16, 2009, GMAC announced that it was expanding its availability of leasing options to include Chrysler vehicles. The revised pricing and enhanced flexibility of the CSCF announced recently will further improve access to financing for the sale of vehicles and equipment, supporting key manufacturers and stimulating Canada's economic recovery.

We continue to monitor access to financing for groups whose financing needs may not be met through the Canadian secured credit facility. We continue to monitor it to get it right. As the Canadian Finance & Leasing Association noted:

This is an evolving process and you want to make sure that taxpayer dollars are protected. This will make the difference between having a strong [securitization] sector in Canada or seeing that sector shrink back dramatically. But we have to get it right and have it work in a way that we will all be pleased.

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, the member has just shown how the Conservatives do not answer questions that have been put very simply. I was not partisan. I simply stated the facts and I simply asked if the government could provide an update and provide actual figures.

Rather than respond to that, the member attacked me. I am not even going to respond to those attacks because they are ridiculous; they are not true. I will come back to my question. Has the government purchased, through the Canadian secured credit facility, any asset-backed securities? It is simple, has it? Yes or no?

On May 8 the minister said the government could purchase, through the CSCF, up to \$12 billion. Has any money actually been used by the facility to purchase asset-backed securities, yes or no?

• (1850)

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I would remind you and all hon. members that I do speak the truth when I speak in the House and I take offence to anyone suggesting that I do not.

We need to recognize that this government has put forward this initiative. It has been voted for by the Liberals and now we understand that they are not even supporting our government, which put this initiative forward, so I would ask the hon. member to go back to her constituents and suggest to them how she can justify not supporting this.

Our Prime Minister has offered an olive branch to work with the opposition, to ensure that Parliament works. The Liberals stand and oppose that, not on principle but they just stand and oppose everything that this Conservative government is putting forward.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last May I asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs why Canada was abandoning its former soldiers, leaving them to languish on the streets, even after they have given so much to all of us and to our country.

In response to my question, the minister said that “the problem is, by its nature, very difficult to identify because many of these men and women suffer from alcoholism and drug dependency”.

Sadly, it was easier for the minister to find reasons to blame soldiers and veterans for their lot than it was for him to actually name real measures that his government has put in place to prepare for and to help this new generation of war veterans.

A few weeks after I asked the question, David Bruser, a reporter with the Toronto *Star*, penned a series of investigative articles for the Toronto *Star* dealing with the emotional aftermath being felt by Canada's Afghanistan war veterans. It was a heart-breaking story that I know was felt by all of us who sit on the veterans affairs committee, and I would expect by the minister himself, because it was quite an eye-opening story.

These articles tell of tragic stories, stories about the serious hardships and mental strains caused by many things, one of them of course being post-traumatic stress disorder. When viewed from a veteran's perspective, his or her home may be the new Afghan war-front.

In one of these articles, Mr. Bruser talked about a young infantryman who was charged with assault after returning from combat in Afghanistan. These were real stories. These were not fictional stories. The story touched upon issues such as mental illness and violence, but more to the point, it explained how a 26-year-old man was emotionally devastated because he enlisted to help his country.

As if that were not bad enough, it would seem that the military threw this young private to the wolves by ignoring the fact that he was facing trial for actions that may well have been caused in part by PTSD.

Even the judge in the case was stunned and confounded by the absence of a military representative in the courtroom. While he was trying to establish the conditions of the private's house arrest, Judge William McCarroll said:

There should be somebody here from the military, right? To take responsibility. And I don't understand why there isn't. I mean, he went to Afghanistan. He did his part. He's back here now. So what is he, cut loose?

I wonder if this private has indeed been cut loose. Have his fellow veterans been cut loose too? Has his government abandoned our war veterans, even after they have given so much to us?

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Bruser's articles talked about several officers and the suffering that they were feeling, how domestic violence was occurring in their families as soldiers were waking up in the night thinking that they were still on the battle fronts in Afghanistan, and beating up their wives at a time when they were suffering from PTSD. The wives were bearing the brunt of that response.

These are very difficult times. I would hope that the government would take a more proactive role in meeting the needs of many of our veterans out there and establish a strategic plan to do so.

• (1855)

Mr. Greg Kerr (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this important matter forward.

As the Minister of Veterans Affairs has said, we only serve in this chamber because our veterans have served our great country. It is because of them that we live in a free and peaceful democratic nation. They have been willing to sacrifice everything for our way of life and we must be there for them in the same way, 100% of the time, without hesitation.

Let me be clear. Even one homeless veteran is one too many. That is why our government, through Veterans Affairs Canada, has a wide range of services and benefits to help these brave individuals make a successful transition to civilian life. We do not want a single veteran left behind and so we work with Canadian Forces members early in their release process to help identify those who may be at risk of homelessness.

If our veterans have physical or psychological injuries, we have a variety of programs to help them restore their health, as well as their ability to function in their home, community and, where possible, the workplace. No two veterans have the same experience or the same approach to wellness. Medical and psychological care, vocational rehabilitation, financial support and health benefits are just a few of the tools at our disposal to help Canada's veterans.

We continue to work with veterans groups and community organizations to reach out to any veteran who is homeless. During the last number of months we have contacted more than 109 homeless shelters and agencies that help the homeless. Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming so can be hard to locate and that is why we have partnered with local groups to set up a six-month pilot storefront operation in Vancouver to reach out to these individuals.

We also encourage organizations and others to refer potential clients to Veterans Affairs by calling our toll free numbers. Those numbers are: 1-866-522-2122 in English and 1-866-522-2022 in French.

When we become aware of a homeless veteran, we help the veteran find support from the kinds of programs I mentioned earlier or through other available community resources. We are committed to helping our veterans and current soldiers overcome psychological injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder, addictions and anxiety disorders.

We have nine specialized clinics across the country where veterans who suffer from operational stress injuries, or OSIs, can

be treated in a supportive environment. We also have a residential clinic at Ste. Anne's Hospital, a place where veterans can live for up to eight weeks to concentrate full-time on their treatment.

There is also a peer program called operational stress injury social support, which enlists the help of counsellors who have recovered from operational stress. Having been there themselves, these counsellors offer vital support to those who need it. They reach out to help veterans and their families deal with the serious problems they have. The success of this program is a result of Veterans Affairs Canada and the defence department working together.

The government has made a commitment to meet the needs of Canada's veterans today and, therefore, the creation of the Veterans Ombudsman and the Veterans Bill of Rights are proof of this. We will continue to do our very best for our country's truest heroes.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his response, but clearly it is not enough. David Bruser's column outlined young soldiers all across Canada who were clearly suffering from PTSD and other repercussions, marriages falling apart and so on.

I acknowledge the programs that are currently in existence and the veterans charter that the former minister introduced. A lot of work was done for veterans under the previous Liberal administration, but clearly not enough is being done when soldiers are sleeping on the street, suffering from domestic violence, and all the things that are happening to them.

More needs to be done. I appreciate the answer, but it is still insufficient. I would like to ask that the parliamentary secretary take a message to the minister that we would like to see more done, especially at the committee level, on this issue.

• (1900)

Mr. Greg Kerr: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I have shared time in committee together and realize that what we are going to be facing next year as colleagues, both at the committee stage and certainly here in the House, is that more and more veterans are returning who need this care.

There is a long ways to go on this very important journey and we are very open to receiving advice and input that tells us how to do this better. It is never going to be perfect but veterans deserve every bit of care.

I want to say on that point that we look forward to the continued co-operation to find the right answers and to do the very best we can for these veterans that served our country so well.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 30, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages assured this House that the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games would be entirely respectful of Canada's official languages when it comes to the cultural Olympiad, the opening and closing ceremonies and the torch relay. That same day, the minister even invited me to go to Vancouver myself to see the progress that had already been made by VANOC, the Olympic organizing committee.

I went there, and I am not convinced that the Olympic Games in Vancouver will be bilingual. And I am not the only one. The Commissioner of Official Languages just released a new follow-up report in September 2009, in which he shared his concerns and made recommendations. I rise in this House today to say that the majority of the promises the minister made in April are not in place today, six months later, and the Games are only a few months away.

For example, on April 30, 2009, the minister assured the House that translation services would be put in place to ensure that the Games are completely bilingual.

Six months later, the commissioner not only reports that there is a delay in translation, but expresses concern that the stated objectives for translation have been lowered. He states, and I quote:

...VANOC indicates that "in exceptional circumstances, unanticipated communications will be consecutively broadcasted within a twelve-hour period in the second language, and urgent communications, within a six-hour period." This clause is not in keeping with the multiparty agreement.

I could go on all evening about the lack of volunteers, the fact that French-language services are not available on the sites of various federal institutions that are to be providing services during the games, and so on.

What I see, what the commissioner saw and what the whole world will unfortunately see during the Olympic Games next February is that French does not have equal status with English in the conduct of the event and that the official languages objectives that were set have not been met.

As a Canadian, I am worried that, once again, Canada will not honour its commitments.

As the critic for la Francophonie, I wonder how the event's organizers, including the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, are going to justify all these organizational shortcomings to the thousands of French-speaking athletes who will be visiting a member of the francophonie and a country with French as one of its official languages, yet who will not be able to get an answer in French at most sites, will not see their biographies presented in French for the media and will not have access to the translation and signage services they have a right to expect.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ever since Vancouver made its bid to host the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, promoting both our official languages has been part of our commitment in support of that bid, pursuant to the Official Languages Act.

Efforts have also been made by the federal government to ensure that French takes its rightful place not only during the games, but also before and during the torch relay. It is a \$24.5 million investment by our government. Thanks to that investment, the torch relay will allow thousands of anglophone and francophone communities to participate.

The Government of Canada is committed to having these games reflect the country's linguistic duality. We have taken steps to help VANOC respect the multiparty agreement. We have also encouraged the participation and representation in the games by official language minority communities.

To guarantee that all the cultural activities surrounding the games are bilingual, we have made the multiparty agreement official language requirements part of the contribution agreements for the torch relay, celebration sites, the cultural Olympiad and the opening ceremony.

On September 15, we announced \$7.7 million in additional funding for translation and interpretation, signage and the medal ceremonies.

We will sign a memorandum of understanding with Public Works and Government Services Canada in order that the Translation Bureau can provide its expert services in translation and interpretation during the games.

This funding is consistent with a number of the recommendations by the Commissioner of Official Languages. What is more, in his follow-up report, the commissioner took note of the progress made by VANOC and by Canadian Heritage.

It is important to note that official languages before, during and after the games are VANOC's responsibility. It is VANOC's responsibility to serve francophones from across the country who will be participating in these games.

We are working together with the federal institutions responsible for essential federal services. We are working with the Treasury Board Secretariat in order to support the institutions that will provide services in both official languages to visitors from Canada and from the rest of the world.

Our overall objective is to ensure the bilingual character of the games and we in the federal government are taking that responsibility seriously.

● (1905)

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, of course I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for her reply, and I am very pleased to see that progress has been made. I thank the parliamentary secretary, and through her, the minister responsible.

However, she did talk about it as being part of their commitments. Commitments have been made; everyone agrees on that. What we on this side of the House find disappointing is the fact that, when it comes to honouring those commitments, they are not doing a very good job.

I said I had other examples. Here is another one. On April 30, 2009, the minister said: "Every Olympic Games site, including the Richmond Oval, will have bilingual signage".

Adjournment Proceedings

However, in his September 2009 report, the commissioner said there were some shortcomings in the organization of that event. Recommendations 3 and 4 state: "The Commissioner recommends that VANOC ensure that all signage respect the equality of both official languages". I could go on, but clearly, not enough work has been done in that regard.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear about this: the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver will be bilingual. We will respect both of Canada's official languages and we expect VANOC to do its job. VANOC is in charge. To help out, our government has just provided another \$7.7 million to provide VANOC with the translation services that my colleague just spoke about. That includes signage for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

She also mentioned the Richmond Oval. Our government has invested more than \$30.5 million to ensure the success of the Richmond Oval and other Olympic venues.

The Olympic Games will respect both official languages and VANOC will do its job. We will make sure of that.

● (1910)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:10 p.m.)

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