



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 145 • NUMBER 023 • 3rd SESSION • 40th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, April 12, 2010

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 12, 2010

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

PAY EQUITY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS ACT

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.) moved that Bill C-471, An Act respecting the implementation of the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force and amending another Act in consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to present private member's Bill C-471, which relates to putting into operation the recommendations of a 2004 working group on pay equity and modifying another law in consequence.

[*Translation*]

To come right to the point, hidden in the 2009 budget was a measure that undermined pay equity. This bill, which we support, restores pay equity as a human right. That is paramount for us.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, you may at this point, however, have a feeling that you have walked into Groundhog Day because I have been on my feet before on this very project. That is because the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament before Christmas, so we are having a Groundhog Day experience today as I reintroduce this legislation.

The purpose of the government's prorogation of Parliament, of course, was, as it said, to recalibrate. It seems to have now recalibrated its cabinet a bit, but it has not been able to avoid the questions that it sought to avoid when it prorogued Parliament, namely, the questions about Afghan detainees and the other urgent public matters on which it sought to avoid the scrutiny of Canada.

The prorogation attempt failed. All it has managed to do is set back the legislative agenda for several months and, unfortunately, the legislative progress of this worthy measure. That is why I am here today and the House will remember the experience of having lived through this whole thing once before.

Let me enter into the discussion of the matter. Budget 2009, in the dumpster bill aspects of the budget implementation act, introduced measures which would reduce pay equity to a chip on the bargaining table in labour relations. We on this side of the House believe, as a matter of principle, that pay equity is not a labour relations issue but a fundamental human right.

We need to see this measure in the context of a historical anniversary. The House will be aware that this is the 40th anniversary of the report on the status of women, the great commission chaired by Florence Bird, a great Canadian. It was commissioned under the Pearson government that set the agenda for women's issues and equity issues for the next 40 years. That agenda included, let us remember: child care, pay equity, maternal leave and more women in the House and the judiciary.

We can say after 40 years that some progress has been made, but there is an enormous amount of work still to do and on this side of the House we remain fiercely and passionately committed to that agenda. We remain committed to early learning and child care for every Canadian family that wants it. We remain committed to adequate and restored funding for Status of Women Canada.

We remain committed to the idea that it is a stain on our national honour that there are missing aboriginal women who have simply disappeared. We have not even taken the trouble as a country to give their families the answers they need as to what happened to these fellow citizens of our country. That is a wrong that must be righted and we stand for the righting of that wrong.

We also stand for the reintroduction of the court challenges program, which women have used to defend their rights and which the government has undermined. Finally, to put this measure in context, we stand for pay equity for women.

[*Translation*]

It is abundantly clear that we have a lot of work to do. Women in Canada earn 72¢ for every dollar a man earns.

In the case of a woman with children, it is 52¢.

[*English*]

We think this is in an inequity that must be corrected and it can only be corrected by proactive federal pay legislation. Men outnumber women by 330%. Yes, members heard me right. It is 330% among top earners. This is also a sign that in a country that claims equality, we have much more to do.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

We must do better. We can do better. We will do better.

[English]

Let us review very briefly the government's record on this issue. It came to the G8 summit with the admirable objective of helping women and children in the developing world, but with nothing on the necessary reproductive health care that will actually make a difference and reduce death in pregnancy and improve maternal and child health. Nothing.

The government has cut the operating budget of Status of Women Canada. Just last week it cut the pay equity commission in New Brunswick. It has abolished the court challenges program. It has eliminated \$1 billion of committed federal funding to day care since 2006.

This is the record of the government on the other side of the House. This is where we begin to see the larger design between taking pay equity off the human rights table and putting it on the labour regulations table where it can be traded away.

This is the grander design to which we object. We are taking the pay equity issue as an example of a wider failure of the government to advance the cause of women's equality in Canada.

What does our proposal specifically entail? It entails a federal pay equity commission with jurisdiction over the federal public service, crown corporations and the federally regulated corporations. This commission would have a proactive mandate. It would have a mandate to deliver judgments in a timely fashion. Above all, it would give women the right to advance their claims to pay equity within the framework of human rights.

This is an important matter because the Government of Canada is the largest employer in the country. The Government of Canada can set an example to all employers across the country and it must on the issue of pay equity for women.

In conclusion, this private member's bill will undo what we conceive to be a wrong. It will restore pay equity as a human right with a proactive federal pay equity commission. We urge all members to support it.

• (1110)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition decided to vote for the budget, what part did he not understand? That was the budget that took away women's right to pay equity.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question and I also thank her for all the hard work she does as a member of Parliament.

We are very aware of what was in the 2009 budget. We read it carefully, but we found that it contained a fundamental error that undermines pay equity and prevents Canada from protecting people's rights to pay equity. Our position is that a federal pay equity commission must be restored to protect and defend human rights, which are what pay equity is all about.

I would like to say that I would be very happy if the hon. member were to support this bill.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his speech today the Leader of the Opposition said that our government has done nothing for aboriginal women. I work very closely with Grand Chief Ron Evans and the aboriginal women and men across this country.

Earlier this year our government gave \$100,000 for a conference that was held in Winnipeg on missing women. In addition to that, this money was also used for education materials to help people understand what happens when predators target children.

I am wondering whether the opposition leader knew of this initiative that was so important and why he would not be a bit more careful in his comments instead of being so partisan because our government has done a lot of work.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a concern across the House about missing aboriginal women. The question is not whether there is concern. The question is whether there is action.

The hon. colleague opposite is in government. It is up to the government to create a commission of inquiry to get to the truth of this. The funding and the gestures that it has made are commendable. We are saying they are also inadequate and we need to go further.

This is also a government that has been unable to reduce the gap in the funding of education for aboriginal women and unable to reduce the gaps in funding for health care for aboriginal women. This is a government that had to be pressed and pushed by the Government of Saskatchewan and other authorities, and by the distinguished member for Wascana, to step up with the First Nations University. The stepping up is not full and it is not complete. It is begrudging and it is not completed.

All of these measures indicate that the government does not fully understand the importance of advancing the cause: the equality of aboriginal women. That was the point I was trying to make.

• (1115)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives made their attack on pay equity very clear when they came back with that toxic economic update that they threw to the middle of the House and there were three main issues in it. First, there was the attack on pay equity; second, there was the attack on environmental standards; and third, there was the attack on political parties getting financed.

Therefore, we were at a constitutional crisis at that moment and when the Liberals caved, they received one benefit. The only thing that the Conservatives caved on was the fact that the Liberal Party is still getting its election donations through the taxpayer. At the time when we could have made the issue of pay equity an issue to push back, when it was an issue of confidence, the Liberals rolled over. They were missing in action.

Now, we are to believe that a private member's bill that comes in on a Monday morning is action. I would say that the member had the chance to take action and the Liberals refused because they did not want to stand up at the time. Now they are going to walk around the country saying, "Wait, after we voted to kill pay equity, now we have a private member's bill".

I think that shows a complete lack of concern for the fact that my party and our colleagues in the Bloc were looking to the Liberals to fight for pay equity—

The Speaker: Order. We are running out of time. The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, a brief response.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff: Mr. Speaker, I note my colleague's comments with interest and some amusement, noting that his party supported the government last September. I would urge him to set aside partisanship and rancour from times past and consider the virtues of supporting a measure, which I am sure aligns with the fundamental principles of his party.

I cannot understand why, if we have a chance to correct what I am sure his party agrees is a serious and grave mistake, he would not seize the opportunity to vote with us on the bill and correct the wrong that he identifies as clearly as we do.

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see the Leader of the Opposition back in the House of Commons today.

It is a pleasure to speak today to the issue of pay equity. Contrary to the statements of the hon. member sponsoring the bill we are debating today, our government supports the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Our commitment to this fundamental right is why we acted to ensure a more proactive and timely approach to equitable compensation in the federal public service. Our government's approach has brought much needed reform to the previous complaint based pay equity regime. The previous regime was lengthy, costly and adversarial, and did not serve employees or employers well.

We are fortunate in this country. Canada's public service is among the finest in the world. Canada's public service employs some of the best and brightest people whose work is intimately tied to the well-being of our country. Public service employees work in more than 200 federal organizations and dozens of different occupations, from border guards, to food inspectors and from public health specialists to diplomats. We should never doubt for a moment the importance of what public servants do on behalf of this country.

This point was brought home by the Prime Minister's advisory committee on public service when it stated in its first report:

As a national institution, a high-quality, merit-based Public Service is part of Canada's comparative advantage and a key to competitiveness in the global economy. It also helps provide the foundation for sound democratic government, which is critical to a positive business climate in Canada.

This proud reputation is what has made the federal public service one of the best and most attractive places to work. Competitive salaries and a full range of family friendly benefits also make the public service attractive for both men and women.

The hon. member raises the issue of gender gap. We have seen significant progress toward greater gender balance in the public

Private Members' Business

service, particularly within the senior ranks. It is worth noting that back in 1983 fewer than 5% of women were in senior management. Today, women make up 43% of the senior and executive ranks of the federal public service. To be sure, women are taking their rightful place in the federal public service. They are not only accessing top jobs but their representation in other categories has also increased dramatically over the years. For example, women now represent nearly 56% of knowledge workers. They also represent about half of the economist group and they represent about 43% of the commerce officer group.

It is safe to say that over the past few years there has been a significant change in the face of Canada's public service and women have played a big role in this change. Today's public service provides women and men with equal access to all positions and identical wages within the same groups and levels. I am proud of the example we are setting for both private and public sector organizations around the world. Remarkable progress has been made in addressing the wage gap between men and women in the federal public service.

The difference between total wages for women and total wages for men has been decreasing steadily. This bodes well for the future. This situation and the need to ensure the strides women have made in the federal public sector continue to be maintained led our government to put in place a more modern approach to pay equity. We took action to end the long and drawn out court cases of the past. It is worth recalling that the last court ruling on pay equity was in 1999, a settlement that took a gruelling 15 years to achieve. We cannot afford any more repeat performances. This is unfair to women. Public service employees deserve better. Taxpayers deserve better.

The root of the problem in the previous system is that pay equity issues were raised after compensation decisions were made. Federal public service employers and unions were not required to take pay equity issues into account during wage setting. These issues were only raised when complaints were made. This has led to ad hoc progress on pay equity, a situation that the Canadian Human Rights Commission lamented in its 2001 special report to Parliament.

Those are some of the reasons that our government passed legislation, with the support of many members opposite, that ensures that old ways become a thing of the past in the public sector. The new system makes employers and bargaining agents jointly accountable for setting fair wages, ensures these decisions are made at the time of collective bargaining for unionized employees and imposes a rigorous process to ensure the federal public service employers address pay equity in a timely way for non-unionized employees.

Private Members' Business

•(1120)

I will underline a key feature of our reforms. The new system maintains the right of women to launch complaints through an independent oversight organization: the Public Service Labour Relations Board. As a neutral third party, established in 1967, the board is well-equipped to ensure fair and objective recourse. It should be obvious to all that we needed to replace the previous complaint based pay equity regime that left us with a lengthy, costly and adversarial process. This was a process that did not take into account the realities of the Canadian labour market.

Moving to an approach that is based on collaboration with bargaining agents, ensures pay equity issues are addressed as they arise and that problems are resolved quickly.

The legislation this government introduced gives us a more modern and collaborative approach. It rids us of the previous system which was archaic, onerous and unfair to women in the public service. Most important, it protects the principal of equal pay for work of equal value. It ensures that women and men continue to benefit from quality working conditions in Canada's public service. Equitable compensation can only be ensured through a proactive, timely and fair system where employers and bargaining agents work together rather than as adversaries. That is what we have put in plan.

Now, the bill in question calls for a repeal of the legislation that created this new approach. By proposing this bill, the Leader of the Opposition is asking women to wait once again. He is asking women to wait for a new system that would cover the federally-regulated private sector. This is a diverse group of employers who would face significant challenges in implementing such far-reaching measures. We understand how difficult this would be for Canadian employers. We have taken an approach to addressing pay equity with this group of employers. We brought forward the pay equity program run by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. This program takes a three-pronged approach of education, mediation and compliance monitoring to help private sector employers comply with the legislation.

Our government has moved forward toward a more just approach. To support the bill before us would be to delay justice once again. Justice delayed is justice denied.

I call upon my colleagues in the House to oppose this bill and thereby support the new system our government has put in place.

•(1125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it gives me no pleasure to rise today in the House to speak to this private member's bill.

In 2009, we did not agree with the budget and we voted against it because it did irreparable harm to women who have done an outstanding job working in the public sector for many years and yet are not given their due.

These women, who have worked for many years in government departments and federally regulated corporations, had the right to expect that all the opposition members would vote against the budget bill that stripped them of their rights.

Unfortunately, over the past four years, the government has chipped away at their rights. The same thing has happened with a number of other status of women issues. Members of the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party stood up in the House to vote against the bill that day because we had no doubt that if we voted for it, we would betray the trust of all of those women. Those women are Quebecers and Canadians. I want to emphasize that they are Canadians because the opposition leader seems to think that the Bloc Québécois stands up only for the rights of Quebecers, not those of Canadians.

I want to point out that the opposition leader and his party members were not among the members who dared vote against this bill. When the time came to vote, they were not considering the Canadians this bill would hurt. He did not do what he should have back then, which is why we have to debate another bill today to give the right to pay equity back to these women.

Pay equity is not complicated: it means receiving equal pay for work of equal value. Work of equal value is easy to define if we have the proper tools to define it. A task force began studying the issue in 2001, and in 2004, it produced a comprehensive report over 500 pages long. The report recommended very specific steps to take to achieve pay equity and ensure that all women working for an organization under federal jurisdiction benefit from pay equity.

People have been fighting for this for years. For example, the rights of a number of women working for Bell Canada and various federal organizations were infringed upon. In Quebec, pay equity has already been achieved. These women were aware that their situation was not the same as that of Quebec women working for organizations under Quebec jurisdiction.

In the early 2000s, there was enough money to meet these needs, but sadly, the Liberal government of the day did not meet the needs of public and private sector employees under federal jurisdiction.

We could spend all day wondering. But the answer is in the question. As soon as an opposition party takes power, its convictions and perceptions of things change. It suddenly realizes that it is not possible to achieve pay equity, because it would be much too costly. But when these parties are in opposition, their convictions are much more in tune with the needs of the workers, ordinary human beings working from 9 to 5 every day. We meet these people in our ridings.

•(1130)

They trust us. They develop a bond with us. We listen carefully and then we are supposed to share their concerns here, in the House, to show them that they have been heard and that we will listen to them. Unfortunately, as it stands, neither side of this House seems to be listening.

The government is not listening. Since it took power, the government has made cuts to women's programs. It cut the court challenges program, it made shameless cuts to programs in Status of Women Canada, and it took away the right to pay equity.

Private Members' Business

Earlier, the hon. member was saying that anyone who now wants to seek pay equity can go before the labour court. How can a woman go before the labour court all by herself if she does not even have the right to be accompanied by a union representative? She does not even have the right to be accompanied by someone who knows all the rules and all the labour laws to defend her. If someone from her union decided to support her and defend her, the union would have to pay a \$50,000 fine. Can you believe that? Have we ever seen such a glaring inequity? I have never seen anything like it, and I hope I never will again. I hope to never see such glaring inequities in this House again.

All women working in the public sector have called on us to return to the House and prepare a much more detailed and complete bill that will restore their right to pay equity. For these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will definitely be supporting the bill presented by the Leader of the Opposition.

However, we will examine this bill with a fine-tooth comb. We will ensure that it meets all needs, and that its application and implementation also conform to what is decided by Parliament.

All too often it is easy to draft a bill. It is easy to vote in favour of a bill. However, once the bill has been passed, things may be different.

Take, for example, the Immigration Act and the Liberal Party promises with respect to immigration. To date, these promises have not been kept, even though they were enshrined in legislation. They were made and voted on.

I would be surprised, even astonished, to see a bill on pay equity passed by the House. We know that the Conservatives will oppose this bill. I would be astonished if such a bill contained all the measures required to give women true pay equity.

Working women in Quebec who fall under federal labour laws are not entitled to preventive withdrawal, a measure extended to all other Quebec women. That is also part of equity.

Quebec women who work in federally-regulated undertakings do not have the right to the same parental leave as other women in Quebec. If, unfortunately, after taking parental leave, their employer fires them when they return to work, they are not entitled to employment insurance benefits. They are not entitled because they were sick during their parental leave.

In fact, according to the employment insurance system, a woman who gives birth to a child is sick. She qualifies for sick leave. Even if the Quebec government pays for parental leave, the woman fired when she returns to work is considered to have been sick. These are issues that must be clarified.

• (1135)

I hope that when this bill goes to committee, given the great wisdom of this House, we will be able to ensure the pertinence of all items contained therein.

[English]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you may recall that on March 4, 2009, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore instructed his party to vote to end pay equity in this

country. He and his party effectively handed a death sentence to pay equity in Canada.

The day before the vote, he stood outside this chamber and said to the press, in reference to pay equity, “We have made it clear that we are not pursuing an amendment strategy. Sometimes we have to hold our nose”.

He abandoned women, abandoned equality and voted to dismantle pay equity in Canada. Now, just a few scant months later, he has introduced a private member's bill in support of something he and his party voted to eliminate. The member knows very well that this bill, even if supported by all opposition members and passed in the House, will never see royal assent. It will never become law. This member knows full well that he had his opportunity to save pay equity last spring and he failed.

Women have fought long and hard for the right to equal pay for work of equal value. When he and his party stood up in the House and voted in favour of Bill C-10, they betrayed women all across the country and made it clear that women's equality means absolutely nothing to the Liberal members of this place.

I confess that I find this bill, coming from the Liberal Party, to be hypocritical. They had 13 years of majority government to promote stable economic security for women. They had 13 years of majority government to implement progressive pay equity legislation. What did they do? They cut spending to Status of Women and failed to implement any of the 113 recommendations from the pay equity task force.

The Conservative members of the House have no intention of addressing inequality between the sexes in this country either. We see unequivocal proof from government actions in regard to pay equity, changes it made to Status of Women, the elimination of the court challenges program, the dismantling of the gun registry and more. The Conservatives have absolutely no intention of addressing inequality any more than their Liberal predecessors.

The Conservatives, with support from the Liberals, are taking Canadians back 25 years instead of moving Canada forward. Now it is clear to me why the Conservative Party eliminated pay equity last spring. In 1998, the current Prime Minister described our current pay equity laws in the following words. He said:

For taxpayers, however, it's a rip-off. And it has nothing to do with gender. Both men and women taxpayers will pay additional money to both men and women in the civil service. That's why the federal government should scrap its ridiculous pay equity law.

He also pointed to specific flaws in the current legislation. He said:

Now “pay equity” has everything to do with pay and nothing to do with equity. It's based on the vague notion of “equal pay for work of equal value”, which is not the same as equal pay for the same job.

Just to be clear, in 1998, the member who is now our Prime Minister did not, and does not, believe in pay equity at all.

Private Members' Business

What is not clear to me is why the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore and his party, all of whom voted to eliminate pay equity, are suddenly so very interested in introducing a pay equity bill for consideration in this Parliament. I want to reiterate. The fact remains that while Liberals were in power, women's rights, economic security and pay equity were stalled. The Liberals failed to act as an effective government and now they are failing to act as an effective opposition.

In March 1997, the then secretary of state for the status of women announced the elimination of program funding for women's organizations starting in the 1998-99 fiscal year. From that point on, moneys from Status of Women Canada were delivered on a project-by-project basis within the priority areas set out each year by SWC. This eliminated any long-term or core funding for women's groups. Overall, program funding for women's organizations was cut by more than 25% over the 1990s.

The Liberal government also disbanded the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, an agency that conducted research on a wide range of issues as they affect women. The previous Liberal government then merged the body that provides funding to women's organizations, the women's program, into Status of Women Canada and proceeded to eliminate the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, which had given organizations of women, people of colour and people with disabilities a small voice in training policy. Women's equality-seeking groups were dealt blow after blow.

● (1140)

Economic security for women hinges on key things such as access to child care, access to affordable housing and the ability to earn a decent living. Both Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to address the need for affordable housing in Canada. The first step toward economic security for any person is a safe place to live. Despite this, the Liberals ended the federal role in social housing in 1996.

Both Liberal and Conservative governments also failed to create affordable child care in this country. The Conservative-touted taxable money for child care has failed to create a single child care space in Canada. In 1993, the Liberals promised to create 150,000 new child care spaces, but after 12 years and 3 majority governments, they had created none.

Today, a woman still earns only about 72.5¢ for every dollar a man earns. Because pay inequity contributes to poverty, it has a devastating effect on the health and social consequences for children. Pay inequity is also related to economic dependence, which can affect an abused woman's ability to leave a violent relationship. The choice between abuse and poverty is one no person should ever have to make. It is also true that women bringing home lower paycheques also receive lower retirement income. Too often senior women live hand to mouth until the end of their lives.

I will not stand here and just point out how both the Liberals and the Conservatives have failed women in Canada. It could take up several speaking spots to do that. I prefer to show fellow members of the House that positive action for women can be achieved. New Democrats have released a fairness for women action plan. Part of that plan includes making equal pay the law. Canada needs proactive pay equity legislation that would compel all employers to ensure that

all employees are getting equal pay for work of equal value. The NDP's plan to make Canada a leader in gender equality has at its core the implementation of the pay equity task force and in particular the introduction of proactive federal pay equity legislation.

New Democrats would increase access to employment insurance. Only one in three unemployed women collects employment insurance benefits. The NDP plan to ensure access to EI includes an overhaul of the legislation governing employment benefits. In the 40th Parliament, the NDP introduced 12 private members' bills to include access to this vital income support. Establishing a \$12 minimum wage is crucial. Two-thirds of minimum wage workers over the age of 15 are women. Many minimum-wage-earning women are living well below the poverty line. Clearly the federal government has a role to play in setting fair pay to ensure the welfare of all hardworking Canadians and their families. The NDP has tabled a bill to reinstate the federal minimum wage at \$12 an hour. Members will recall that the minimum wage was scrapped by the Liberals.

Creating a national child care program is at the centre of family security. The House should pass the NDP's national child care act and establish a network of high quality, licensed, not-for-profit child care spaces. The creation of new, reliable child care spaces would mean that women were no longer forced to choose between work and family.

Improving parental and maternity benefits is another part of the NDP plan. One in every three mothers lacks access to maternity and parental benefits under employment insurance. Women are paying an economic penalty for having children. Our plan calls for a dramatic overhaul of maternity and parental leave programs now.

We can achieve equality for women in Canada. What we lack is political will. Past Liberal governments stalled and failed to act. Conservative governments have ignored problems and chosen not to promote equality. Women come last and profitable corporations are first with the members across the aisle. They have chosen tax cuts instead of equity for women. We need a real commitment from the House to act and create the legislation needed to achieve equality for women in Canada. We cannot trust the words of the leader of the Liberal Party any more than we can support the activities of the Conservatives.

In 2006, a former Liberal staffer told the nation that the last-minute Kelowna accord and child care provisions were a deathbed repentance. Canadians turned them out because they did not keep their promises then, and we do not believe them now. The next step is to provide the same treatment for Conservatives: equal treatment for inequality and the offence of betrayal.

Private Members' Business

• (1145)

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the debate on this private member's bill put forward by the leader of my party. This is a very important bill and one which I hope will be supported wholeheartedly by all members of this House.

As members may well be aware, women's equality in this country has been very much the casualty of the current government. We have been subjected to short-term political manoeuvring on women's issues for political gain. In light of some of the remarks that were made earlier, it is important to take a walk down memory lane to remind members in the House of some of the actions taken.

Members who were here in 2005 will remember that the House went down on a vote just on the cusp of a number of major initiatives that members talked about being implemented and taking root.

Members will remember that the national child care strategy had been signed by all of the provinces. My province of Manitoba was the first to sign this agreement. It was one of the most memorable moments in my career as a member of Parliament.

Members will also remember that the Kelowna accord had been signed and was about to take root. I listened to the disrespect shown to the Kelowna accord by some members of the House, that it was written on a napkin, that it was a last minute accord. I want them to say that face to face to those individuals who participated in the 18 month process of developing the Kelowna accord.

That accord would have improved the educational opportunities of countless numbers of young people in this country. It would have improved health care. It would have provided training in health care to a large number of young people. It would have dealt with the issues of maternal health in first nations communities. It would have dealt with the issues of governance.

More important, I want to remind members that the minister of justice at the time and the minister of labour at the time came to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and made a firm, unequivocal commitment to bring forward legislation in March of the following year that would act on the recommendations of the task force on pay equity.

The commitment was made. The legislation was being drafted and it was going to come to the House for review. There was going to be a long consultation process with the appropriate stakeholders in the country on the legislation. It is important that members realize that this legislation was in development, there to be addressed with a strong, firm commitment.

It is important to remember that a national housing policy was about to be announced.

All of that was lost because of the political desire and political aspirations of members in the House.

Women's equality has very much taken a beating under the Conservative government. We have heard other members talk about the removal of equality from the status of women. We have heard about the removal of advocacy funding under Status of Women. We

have heard about the fact that research dollars are no longer available under Status of Women.

We heard from the previous minister that she in fact had the final say on what organizations would or would not receive money under Status of Women funding programs, the partnership and the community program, and that she made the final decision as to who would receive money. We know from anecdotal evidence that the funding for hard-working, long-standing organizations in this country was denied on ideological grounds.

We know there has been little or no gender-based analysis done by the government. As I indicated before, we have lost the early learning and child care programs. Cuts have been made to literacy programs, which affects many women in this country.

• (1150)

As my colleague indicated, there has been little or no action on the missing and murdered aboriginal women. Just this weekend I had the opportunity to meet with a number of families of the missing and murdered aboriginal women to hear of the lack of supports that are available for the families of the women who have gone missing, the trauma in their lives and the inability to respond to it.

We know that the court challenges program has removed women's equality.

The previous minister indicated that she had the authority to influence policy across government and that she operated with "a little big stick". I would say that as far as pay equity was concerned, the minister had no voice, no stick, not big, not little, and it did little for the women of this country.

It was unfortunate that the government surreptitiously, cynically may be the more appropriate word, chose to bring in the pay equity reforms under the budget implementation bill. The government really put the economic recovery of this country at risk by lumping it into that bill rather than having the courage of its convictions to introduce it as a separate bill standing on its own.

We have heard about the disparity of women's wages in this country. We have heard about the disparity of EI availability to women. We know that women are going to be greatly disadvantaged by the legislation the government has brought in, which is why the legislation we are debating today is so important.

Equal pay for work of equal value is a human right. It is not something to be bargained away through the bargaining process. It is not something where if one goes to one's union officials and chooses to ask for the support of one's union in accessing equal pay for work of equal value that a \$50,000 fine be introduced. This is a very cynical approach. It is a very limited approach. It does little good for the women of this country.

I ask that members on both sides of this House read the legislation that we are debating this morning. I think that all reasonable right-thinking individuals would understand that this is a fundamental human right for women. It should be supported. It has support throughout the country. It does not disadvantage women. It is an important piece of legislation for the women of this country.

Private Members' Business

I would reiterate in closing that women in this country have not been well served in the last four years under the current government. It is time to begin a new chapter with a new minister and review what has not been done and what can be done.

This legislation would make a big difference in the lives of women. I urge all colleagues to support it.

• (1155)

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak against Bill C-471, a private member's bill on pay equity.

I would like to draw to the attention of the House an article in today's paper, the headline of which is "Women grab reins of power in PS", from which I would like to quote. I am very proud to be part of a government that has taken a look at this issue and realized that it needed to be addressed. We took stock of it and addressed it in budget 2009. The article states:

A married woman was forbidden from working in Canada's public service 55 years ago, but today women have the majority of jobs and a growing hold on the executive ranks.

They have outnumbered men since 1999, but the government's latest demographic snapshot shows 43 per cent of executives are now women...

I believe that is to the credit of what this government has done and what this government saw was a problem that needed to be addressed.

Our government has made its views against this bill crystal clear, but I am happy to repeat our position today so there is no doubt in anybody's mind that this bill should be sent to the parliamentary dustbin. To be blunt, this bill is too little, too complicated and too late, not to mention out of order.

Our government already took action to modernize pay equity for the public sector. We did this last year when we introduced the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act as part of Canada's economic action plan in budget 2009. That budget was the earliest to be released in Canadian history. Moving at record speed, we cut red tape and delivered the largest economic stimulus in Canadian history.

Today we are beginning to see the first signs of better days ahead. The recovery is still fragile, but it is clear that the Canadian economy has started to recover. This is due in large part to the actions our government has taken, including the extraordinary measures in Canada's economic action plan announced in budgets 2009 and 2010.

Budget 2009 was also notable for creating a proactive pay equity system for the federal public sector. This was no small feat. For too long, women in this country had to endure an adversarial complaints-based pay equity system. For too long, women had to endure a system which was lengthy, costly and did not serve employees or employers well. Thankfully, this Conservative government did something about it. We introduced the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act.

The Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act speaks to our government's respect for the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. It speaks to the fact that women should not have to wait up to 20 years to have their pay equity concerns addressed and that women

should not have to endure gruelling, expensive and divisive court proceedings. This had been a long time coming and I am proud to be part of the effort that finally brought this issue to a close.

Our legislation makes employers and unions in the federal public sector jointly accountable for ensuring that wages are equitable through the collective bargaining process. In other words, the legislation ensures that men and women who do work of the same value receive the same pay. It does so through the process in which wages are actually set and agreed upon. The new system we brought in ensures that equitable compensation issues are addressed as they arise. This is a regime that is modern, timely and responsive. It ensures disputes are resolved quickly and collaboratively.

Now would be as good a time as any to bring up the fact that the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act was passed by Parliament with the support of the Liberal Party, including its leader, who happens to be sponsoring this bill before us today. Mr. Speaker, you heard right. Last year, the Liberals helped us pass the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act and now they want to undo it. Is this a responsible way to conduct the nation's business? I do not think so. No wonder Canadians do not trust the party opposite.

Bill C-471 has many shortcomings. I cannot go into all of them today, but let me discuss a few of them.

One of the most problematic parts of the bill is that it calls on the government to implement every single recommendation of the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force report. There are 113 recommendations, many of which our government rejected with good reason when we drafted the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act.

• (1200)

When the report was released in 2004, the Liberal government of the day publicly spoke out against supporting every recommendation. The former ministers of labour and justice said that the "report does not provide an adequate blueprint for implementation of pay equity and a broad range of federally-regulated workplaces". Therefore, it is clear that many people in the Liberal Party feel uncomfortable with the task force report.

The Liberal leader may not appreciate the mood of his caucus on this issue. He was still living abroad when this happened. Yet the Liberal leader is here today asking Parliament to now implement it wholesale.

I am also gravely concerned that the bill is out of order as it would require a royal recommendation. Some of the recommendations in the task force report would require the creation of new statutory agencies as well as a new system adjudicators. These things cost money. As we know, any legislation that includes new expenditures requires a royal recommendation, which may only be introduced by a minister.

Government Orders

I dare say that the Leader of the Opposition is not a member of cabinet and as a result his bill is out of order.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, we made a point of order on this issue and we look forward to your ruling. Bill C-471 would require that all statutory oversight agencies are put in place not later than January 1, 2011. This is less than a year from now.

In our party we make it a point to consult with stakeholders that will be impacted by our policy. Rushing in the measures proposed in Bill C-471 would not allow for any meaningful consultations. That is not how good policy is made.

To close my remarks, I would like to reiterate our government's position on this proposed legislation. Parliament has already taken action to modernize pay equity in the federal public sector when it passed our Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act. This legislation is the best means to achieve equitable compensation in the public sector. The private member's bill before us today is faulty and impracticable. It would lead to a pay equity regime that requires machinery changes and costs that have neither been fully identified nor quantified.

In the coming weeks and months, our government will consult all key stakeholders and employee representatives as we develop the regulations in support of our legislation. These regulations are scheduled to be in place in 2011, which gives us plenty of time to conduct meaningful consultations with all interested and affected parties. What is more, we believe our legislation will result in better collaboration between federal public sector employers and bargaining agents in achieving equitable compensation.

This government believes that women deserve fair pay. This is a fundamental right and they deserve it now, not 20 years from now.

The Speaker: Order, please. 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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed from April 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois opposes Bill C-9, which would implement the Conservative government's budget, because we do not believe that it has identified the true values and needs of Quebecers and Canadians. And the government's ineptness is equalled only by the ineffective measures it has employed to respond to these needs that it cannot identify.

Weak governments usually feed off those who are even weaker. We know that the Liberal Party will help Bill C-9 pass, but we will continue to oppose it.

This bill demonstrates the Conservative government's will to spare wealthy taxpayers at the expense of the general public, no matter what the cost. It is paying off the deficit thanks to the middle class and workers. Banks and big business are among those wealthy taxpayers.

The measures in this bill are proof of that will. Businesses are not paying their fair share to increase government revenues, except perhaps in that the interest rate paid by the Minister of National Revenue on tax overpayments by businesses will be reduced. If too much tax has been paid, it is most likely because these large companies are making their profits at the expense of small businesses that do not get the help they need and are not profitable.

There is doublespeak when it comes to tax loopholes. On one hand, the government says that it will address this issue. On the other hand, we have Bill C-9, which creates holes in the Income Tax Act allowing businesses not registered in Canada to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

As well, the bill would amend the Telecommunications Act and allow foreign companies who own or operate certain transmission facilities to act as though they were Canadian telecommunications companies.

I will come back in a moment to this point, one that concerns me directly since I am a member of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. In committee, we are currently examining the case of Globalive, among others. As we can see from the bill, the next step will be satellites and after that, all telecommunications.

We oppose the bill because, once again, the government seems to have no compunction about pillaging the employment insurance fund. The employment insurance account will be replaced by the employment insurance operating account, which will start back at zero. We cannot forget that the Liberals managed to wipe out the deficit and pay down the debt by using the EI premiums paid by both workers and employers.

We also know very well that with this budget, over the next five years, the Conservative government plans to use \$19.2 billion for other purposes.

We also oppose this bill because it sets in motion a process to privatize Canada Post Corporation. It also gives the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada powers to protect consumers, which creates a serious risk that Ottawa will infringe on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

Given its desire to transform credit unions—including the Fédération des caisses populaires Desjardins—into federal entities, once again the federal government is showing that it simply wants to centralize powers and decisions to the detriment of Quebec's interests.

Government Orders

• (1205)

We are against this bill because it includes various measures that are clearly a federal government intrusion into Quebec's jurisdictions. Take for example the money allocated to the Rick Hansen Foundation, which falls under the area of health, and to the pathways to education program, which applies to secondary education. We are also against the bill because the Conservatives are denying the existence of more than half the population and the challenges they face. Women are absent from this budget implementation bill. We are also against the bill because it sanctions the Conservative government's inaction when it comes to the environment and tackling greenhouse gases.

I said I would come back to the Telecommunications Act. In the Speech from the Throne, the government said it was going to open the door to foreign investment in the satellite, television and telecommunications industries. We see that in the budget it is opening the door to foreign ownership of satellites. However, let us not forget the matter of Globalive, which according to the CRTC was, in practice, a telecommunications company controlled and owned by foreign interests.

The CRTC ruling was overruled and an order in council issued to ensure that Globalive could take ownership of a foreign company. We know full well that this is just the beginning for foreign telecommunication companies because after the satellites and after Globalive will come telephony, broadcasting and cable. In fact, all telecommunications sectors could potentially belong to foreign companies.

The Speech from the Throne talked about satellites. I have talked to people who use satellites. They are scared stiff about the fact that satellites could belong to foreign companies. They are wondering what would happen if foreign companies got their hands on Telesat. The legislation clearly states that Telesat must remain Canadian owned. If foreign companies could get their hands on it, then major international players could also get Canadian satellites. We know full well that Canadian satellites currently have military applications and functions as well. The Conservative government truly seems to want to defend sovereignty on many levels, but it is prepared to throw open the door to foreign ownership of satellites, telecommunications and therefore all aspects of broadcasting as well.

If I remember correctly, in 1984 a Conservative government came to power, but with one major difference: it was a Progressive Conservative government. That was our first introduction to restrictions on foreign ownership. In 1987 and then in 1991 came the Teleglobe Act and the Telesat Canada Act, which imposed ownership restrictions on the two telecommunication companies named in the titles of these acts. In 1987, the communications minister at that time presented a policy document titled "A Policy Framework for Telecommunications in Canada" in which the government noted that domestic ownership of Canada's telecommunications infrastructure was essential to national sovereignty and security.

• (1210)

In 1987, we had a Progressive Conservative government. That is not at all the case today. This government calls itself Conservative

but it is Reform-Alliance. It wants to use this bill to open the door to foreign ownership by amending the Telecommunications Act.

I would have liked to have had more time to show that the Liberals have a responsibility to vote against this bill. More importantly, they should all attend the vote. If not, it shows that they approve of this bill, with the result that Canada and Quebec will automatically lose a large part of their telecommunications sovereignty.

• (1215)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was intrigued by and interested in the member's comments regarding satellite telecommunications, which is a serious issue for us to be looking at.

The government's approach to the economy and its whole direction is to reduce the barriers and allow for more foreign ownership of the whole economy, let alone the satellite area.

Would the member expand on this whole area and on how serious an economic effect this could have on the Canadian economy?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, this could have a significant or even catastrophic economic effect. We know very well the kind of impact this could have on telecommunications.

In the beginning, the legislation favoured competition within the Canadian and Quebec system, that is, between Canadian-owned companies, excluding foreign ones. If ownership was transferred from one company to another, it still all stayed in the country: competition and innovation took place here, and we saw great innovation within the telecommunications sector.

Now, the Conservative government claims that there will be more competition, and that the public will benefit from lower prices and more innovation. But that is completely untrue, and a foreign company may get its hands on Bell or Rogers and then on all the content. The content could drastically decrease under pressure from these foreign companies, whose sole interest is in generating profits. These profits can often be found in other countries. So we could lose jobs and even see less competition. The same goes for pretty much all the other areas.

In telecommunications, the Canadian identity and the Quebec identity are particularly important, but they could end up paying the price and could dwindle away. Furthermore, when foreign companies take over the satellites, will there be any room left for Canadian content?

For example, if the United States were to purchase one, it might promote only American products. Canadian and Quebec content would end up paying the price.

The Canadian identity, the Quebec identity, and culture and sovereignty especially, would inevitably shrink. This is also true for telecommunications and security, since we are talking about satellites. Sometimes, in more remote countries, when people with evil intentions want to take power, they first take control of telecommunications.

Government Orders

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify something. Perhaps I heard wrong, and I will double-check *Hansard* afterwards. I heard the member say that our government was using the EI fund for things other than what it was set up for. I might be mistaken because I have not looked at the blues but I want to clarify whether that is what was said in this House. In actual fact, the EI fund is used for what it is supposed to be used for, which is helping people who need it.

In 2011, the CEIFB, which is an independent, arm's length commission, will be dealing solely with this fund.

Did I hear that the EI fund was being misused by our government? If that is what I heard, it is totally untrue. Perhaps the member was referring to what happened under the previous government.

• (1220)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, the only consistency I see is in how the previous Liberal government and the current Conservative government used the employment insurance fund. Nothing has changed. On the contrary, huge cuts were made to the employment insurance fund, particularly with regard to eligibility and benefits.

Naturally, they will say that we voted against some of their bills that would supposedly have improved the employment insurance system. We are very aware of the needs of people who lose their jobs; they have to be able to adapt to new jobs. We are familiar also with the needs of older workers who are not able to bridge the gap to their retirement.

With regard to the use of the employment insurance fund, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party are cut from the same cloth. \$54 billion went missing before and we know that \$19.2 billion will be used for other things besides helping the unemployed—

The Speaker: I am sorry, but the hon. member's time is up.

[English]

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the budget today. As a former parliamentary secretary to two ministers of finance, I know that the most daunting task of any government is balancing its books.

In 1993, when we came to power, we inherited a \$42.5 billion deficit, of which 33¢ of every dollar spent was borrowed money. We had to make some tough decisions. We had Canadians supporting us in terms of dealing with the deficit to the point where we got out of deficit and started putting money down on the debt. We started ensuring we would deal with a massive debt, which at that time was over \$600 billion.

Government is about priorities. When the Conservatives came to power in 2006, they inherited a \$12.5 billion surplus. They quickly eliminated that through the gimmick of reducing the GST by one point which cost about \$5 billion to \$6 billion. It was not surprising that they got themselves into a financial hole very quickly. The government, not being very good with mathematics, did not even realize that a recession was coming and preempted an election in order forestall the inevitable. A recession came and hundreds of thousands of Canadians were thrown out of work.

We see the consequences of that situation. We know that its figures are not very good. Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, has clearly indicated that the government is out by about \$10 billion. According to the government, we now have a \$56 billion deficit, but it is probably closer to \$66 billion or \$70 billion.

What kind of exit strategy does the government have? It does not have much of an exit strategy. It claims that it does not really need to cut anything or make any really tough decisions because the economy will bounce back and, through growth, it will be able to fill its coffers and everything will be fine. I do not think there are too many economists around who share that view, particularly in its second and third year, where we see this massive jump of about \$26 billion that will suddenly come into the coffers of the government.

The reality is that Canadians are facing some stark decisions at the present time. Hundreds of thousands of people have been thrown out of work in the manufacturing sector, the forestry sector, the mining sector, et cetera across the country.

At the end of October, in my own riding of Richmond Hill, I held a pre-budget forum where we discussed some of the real issues facing people in the riding of Richmond Hill. What the government produced in its budget does not reflect those priorities very much, if at all. The one key area deals with job creation, particularly for small business. Nine out of 10 small businesses in this country create employment. They are the engine of the Canadian economy. The government again failed to address this issue in terms of job creation and jobs for the future. It is not just the stand-pat jobs of today. How do we ensure we are part of that green economy for tomorrow? How do we ensure we are on the innovation agenda, something that was the hallmark of the previous Liberal administration?

Unfortunately, we do not hear the word innovation over there. We do not hear about the jobs for tomorrow that will be for Canadians coming out of universities and colleges, the jobs that will have value, not only for themselves but for Canadians as a whole and for the community at large around the world.

The problem is that there is an imbalance at the moment between people who are looking for jobs and the jobs that are out there. I heard that loud and clear from businesses in my own community. The concern out there is that the government is not providing the kind of regulatory, economic or other tools to stimulate job creation, particularly for small businesses. As we have seen unemployment rise in this country, we have seen people who have become very concerned that there is no hope.

There may be some growth in part-time jobs, but for people who really need a job, retraining is important. Someone between 40 or 45 years of age may have had a job for 20 or 25 years and suddenly he or she is now out of work. The talents and tools people were trained on 20 or 25 years ago are not necessarily germane for today's job market, which is causing them great angst.

Government Orders

•(1225)

We need to see strategic investments particularly in new sectors like green technology. Green technology is obviously something, whether it is wind energy or solar power, where Canada can be a leader. Up to one million jobs could be created in this sector, but again, we need to have the kind of economic tools available, particularly a tax structure and particularly in terms of regulatory mechanisms. For example, when dealing with windmills, rather than import them from Germany, the Netherlands or Denmark, we should build them here. Obviously, that would be of importance.

The federal government's job creation programs in terms of investing in new technologies was something that I heard loud and clear. We need to do that if we really want to be on the cutting edge for the future. The government needs to invest capital into research and development. Again, research and development is absolutely important for those engineers in this country, as an example. We want them to be here, our designers et cetera so that they can stay in Canada and not have to go to the United States or elsewhere. That is important in terms of being able to compete at home on the global market. But again, the budget is very quiet in this area and is something that we need to be addressing for our new graduates.

The federal government should also have provided reforms in terms of policies and educating skilled immigrants. In many sectors, whether it is nursing or medicine in terms of provincial bodies, the fact is that we again need the leadership of the federal government working with the provinces and territories to encourage and to faster integrate new immigrants in Canada. What is the point of bringing new immigrants to Canada if they cannot get a decent job? We often hear about fields such as doctors who cannot practise medicine. The underskilled is a problem and yet those who are skilled are not being utilized. The underutilization of talent in this country is a major problem.

There is no question that with over 300,000 jobs already lost in this country that there is some despair out there. In terms of the budget, we should have addressed how to ensure that we giving a helping hand to people, how do we ensure that we are trying to invest in the right areas. But again, not only the Conference Board of Canada but some conservative institutes out there indicated clearly that the government was simply throwing good money against bad, that it was not doing the kind of investments that need to be done. The C.D. Howe Institute, the Fraser Institute, not exactly good friends on our side, took a very strong stand in terms of looking at where this money was going and obviously were disappointed.

There is the issue of infrastructure funding for not for profit organizations. We have 160,000 charities across Canada that employ over two million people. The government made a big fanfare about trying to invest in these charitable organizations, that it would announce that people in a short period of time, and it was a year ago in August, I think, had 10 days to fill in a form. Now 10 days for non-profits is a major task to begin with. But the government only earmarked about \$4 million and had over 1,000 applicants-plus across the country.

Therefore, people applied and they assumed, because of the big fanfare that the government announced, that after applying they would receive assistance. Certainly, in my riding, although we did

get money after repeated writing and phoning to the minister's office on things like roads, parks, development, et cetera, in the non-profit area it was a disaster. Of the six that applied, not one received any money. They received a curt email saying "too bad, so sad, 1,000 applied and we only had \$4 million, you're out of luck". That is not really very appropriate, particularly when we are talking about a sector where there are two million-plus jobs out there. Again, those are the most vulnerable organizations. When they needed assistance from the government, they clearly did not get it.

The Fraser Institute's recent analysis of Statistic Canada shows that the stimulus package was neither timely nor effective. Again, when talking about infrastructure money, the only people who really made money were those who put up all those signs across the country because obviously those who really needed it, the money was not in hand. The government is great at announcing things, that it is going to be rolled out, but it is not there, the money is not in hand.

•(1230)

If I had the time, I would speak about all of the defence procurements, which the government announced but is not delivering on.

Let me go back, particularly to the issue of small and medium sized businesses, which have been hit hard. Those in Richmond Hill and the southern York region have been hit hard in particular. There is a crisis there. We need to have a responsible government that is absolutely prepared to listen. One of the ways the government could help this situation would be to work much more collaboratively with both provincial and municipal authorities.

Many businesses in my community have asked for certain tax breaks. They have asked for tax breaks in order to help first, in terms of some capital writeoffs for machinery; and second, because they simply are so over-burdened at the present time with the drop in the economy. Times are much more difficult in terms of people spending money that these businesses need. They need to have this kind of assistance.

I would point out that we submitted a detailed report to the Minister of Finance indicating these areas which I am outlining to the House today.

Canada must be competitive, and the only way it can be competitive is in the areas of innovation and good tax policy, in making sure that retraining is available for older workers who need it, and by providing opportunities to our young people. Again, the government seems to have failed in all of these areas.

What did the government do for workers? It brought in a \$13 billion payroll tax hike which will affect over 220,000 small businesses in Canada.

Government Orders

When I hear about EI from members on the other side, I would point out to them that it was the Auditor General who said we could no longer have a stand-alone EI account. I sometimes hear members on the other side refer to an EI fund that was rolled in by the previous Liberal government. In fact, it was the Auditor General who said we could not do that.

A tax increase of \$13 billion is to me a tax. I do not know what else we could call it. The government does not like to refer to it as a tax but the businesses in my community see it as a tax. They see this as a regressive tax which hurts businesses. If a business has 9, 10 or 12 employees and decides to add an employee, or even maintain those that it has, then this tax obviously is not very helpful in terms of any kind of expansion.

There are over one million small businesses in Canada and 98% of these are looking for support. They are not looking for a handout necessarily but a hand up in terms of government policy. Yet, the government is applauding itself and saying we will get through all of this, that we should just grin and bear it. It says it is spending all of this money.

I will be interested to see the Auditor General's report in the fall. We will be able to really start looking at those infrastructure projects that were announced and see just where that money actually wound up. I have no doubt that it is going to be quite a report and quite interesting for Canadians.

This party is concerned about small business. Back in February we held a forum on Parliament Hill dealing with small business. We heard from small business owners who clearly indicated that the government had not been listening. That was obviously reaffirmed with the budget on March 4.

It is important for the manufacturing sector. We are seeing great attrition in this sector and this is of major concern. Capital cost allowance is sorely needed to help our manufacturers, particularly in dealing with new equipment. This needs to be properly addressed.

Canada has the worst youth unemployment record in a generation. Those of us who were here a couple of years ago may remember the debacle of the summer job creation program. Nobody knew who was going to get summer employment. It was so bad the government had the minister of veterans affairs announce more money. I do not know what that minister has to do with youth unemployment. The government finally changed it, and hopefully this year, at least for summer students, we will see some improvement.

I deal a lot with young people as I am sure many members do. Graduates who have come out of university are now going back for a master's program or a Ph.D. Why? They realize they cannot get a job, so they will stay in school because there are no opportunities out there for them. Again, no direction has come from the government in terms of dealing with the chronic youth unemployment situation, which, as I said, is the worst in a generation.

●(1235)

We also need to encourage start-up companies by introducing initial tax measures for Canadians, particularly for young entrepreneurs. The genius of Canadians, of course, is that we are a very inventive nation and we have been able to create, when in fact there

is an opportunity, when the conditions are there. Again, the government seems to have ignored that.

One area which I cannot understand is that when the government has a success, it actually shoots itself in the foot, and that of course was on the ecoEnergy program. I am sure there are constituents of many members here, certainly my constituents, who since 2007 were applying and were certainly taking advantage of that program. The abrupt cancellation of this program, almost in the middle of the night, was because it was too popular.

What could be more important than dealing with energy efficiency, particularly in this day and age? It was cancelled and I understand that of the \$745 million for the program, only \$91 million has ever been actually directed toward customers as rebates.

What is interesting here is that people actually said, "I want to make my home more energy efficient and I am going to take advantage of this program". People lined up to be part of this, but again we do not know where the other \$654 million is. It is not accounted for. Hopefully, we will see it when the Auditor General takes a look, but again it is a question of cancelling a successful program.

Many members on this side know that energy efficiency and climate change are not things that are very popular on the other side, but it is important that those kinds of programs address the needs of Canadians. Obviously, it helps in terms of reducing their expenditures, particularly for heating. Many small businesses that were involved in this kind of retrofitting program found it a great boon. I have companies in my riding that took advantage of it, saying, "We have all these customers now. This has been a great program". Of course, once it was cancelled the phones lit up with people asking why the government did this, why it was cancelling the program. Again, there is no rhyme or reason, but it was cancelled.

Going back to one of the most important issues, when we have the kind of deficit that we have in this country, we cannot expect that governments are going to be able to spend their way out, but we would expect to have an exit strategy that very clearly lays out how it is going to tackle getting out of the economic mess that we are in. Unfortunately, nobody believes the projections it has and because nobody believes the government, there is a great sense that in fact it is going to get worse and worse. Kevin Page was very clear that the government was out by at least \$10 billion. Who knows how much more?

Government Orders

The difficulty is that we have to be able to explain to Canadians what the nature of the problem is and how we are going to deal with it, as we did when we were in government. We did many things as a government to deal with an economic crisis in deficit. We made sure that we did not merge the banks. I remember my colleagues on the other side saying, "We have to be like Citibank". Who is now taking the credit today for what Paul Martin did, in assuring that we did not have bank mergers? It is those guys on the other side, and I have to say that that is a bit hypocritical, given the fact that when I was parliamentary secretary, I had more Conservatives come over and say, "We are not going to be competitive globally unless we are like Citibank".

It is good that we did not listen to the economic gurus on the other side. They like to say that they are the economic gurus. The economic gurus have a \$56 billion deficit. The economic gurus say, "Let us have bank mergers". The economic gurus say, "Just let the market run its course".

Sometimes government can play a very positive role in society. In this case, we did play that positive role and because of that, we came out of a very difficult situation. Unfortunately, it did not take the Conservatives very long to get back into one. With a \$42.5 billion deficit for 23 years, which they now think they are going to get out of in five, and good luck to them, there is not an economist worth his or her salt who believes that that is credible. Certainly, we on this side do not see that happening in the foreseeable future.

• (1240)

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member on his speech, but I find something rather incredulous in all of this. I, too, represent a York region riding just to the north of Richmond Hill. I have seen considerable business activity going on in the riding of Richmond Hill, with the number of investments that our government has made through the economic action plan.

We put in place the home renovation tax credit in the 2009 budget, which made opportunities for many local contractors to sign contracts with people who wanted to do work in their homes. We will have the lowest corporate tax rate in the G7 by 2012. We put in place assistance for our manufacturers through their capital cost input reduction.

Why will the member not support our budget?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: First, Mr. Speaker, I point out for the hon. member that the corporate tax was dropped under the Liberals, from 26% down to 18%. In fact, the Liberals actually reduced the corporate tax. Under the hon. member's government, it has maybe dropped 1% or 2%. The reality is we were the ones who made it economically competitive at a time when the Conservatives were saying something else.

The home tax renovation was very good public policy, but, unfortunately, it was cancelled.

In my riding of Richmond Hill, I am interested in not only ensuring that I am going to more openings than closings, but also that we are attracting the kind of leading edge technology businesses that are going to employ people in the long term. We are not seeing that at the present time. Therefore, we have to look at a budget.

When we look at a budget, we want to look at the totality of that budget.

We keep seeing a lot of gimmicks and a lot of flashy programs today that are then eliminated. I do not like deficits. Nobody likes deficits. However, I would like to see a strategy that shows us how to get out of it. I want to see an innovation agenda showing that we are worried about the young people today and those older workers who need to be retrained. We want to work collaboratively with the provinces and municipalities because we are in a global situation. We are not only competing with Vancouver or Quebec City, we are competing with New Delhi, Tokyo and everywhere around the world. To do that, we have to ensure we are there.

What I am seeing in my York region is a little different from what my friend to the north is seeing.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I always get great enjoyment listening to the Liberals speak. I have never found a group that is meaner or tougher when it comes to shadow boxing in their bedrooms. However, when it comes time to getting into the ring with that ideological crew, they always take a dive.

I was particularly amused by the hon. member's comments about the bank deregulation. If he looks at the *Hansard* records, he will remember that the Liberal government attacked the NDP for being concerned little old nannies when we kept saying that we had to stop bank deregulation. We pushed that again and again and the Liberals ridiculed us. Now, suddenly, when they do not have to stand up and do anything on it, they are trying to take credit.

I would like to ask the member about another key area to be deregulated in Bill C-9, which would take away the post office privilege. We would deregulate the post offices. All across rural Canada, people are looking at what is going to happen with the post offices, but I am hearing nothing from the Liberal Party. Will the Liberals cave on this, undermine Canada Post and all our rural post offices? Will they go along with it or will they stand up to the government, which is breaking apart, point after point in industry after industry, Canada's advantage?

• (1245)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing like hearing from members who have never been in government and probably will not be in government and therefore can pontificate on absolutely everything under the sun.

If my friend over there ever got the levers of power, the \$66 billion deficit would look like a blip compared to what those guys would do.

Seriously, on the question of rural post offices, I believe it should be a right of Canadians to get their mail. I do not agree with the elimination of post offices in rural Canada, so my friend should be happy with that.

Government Orders

I would also point out for my friend that when it comes to the serious issues of the day, when the NDP had an opportunity to support social housing, national transportation, et cetera, it pulled the plug on the Martin government in 2005, and look what we got.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always stand in great amusement over the NDP and its little tirade about shadow boxing. I think that is what my friend used.

Back in September, there was a motion in the House to express non-confidence and by the time the vote was over, there had to have been an entire team of paleontologists outside this chamber. The reason why they were there was that the NDP members lost their backbone so quickly they had created a whole new class of invertebrate. The paleontologists waited for them to come outside because they abstained on the vote. Therefore, I always find it incredibly rich when I hear them talk about shadow boxing.

However, I want to return to the topic at hand. My colleague was a former president of municipalities of our country. One of the issues I find with great difficulty is the cost sharing element of the budget and the infrastructure spending when it comes to the economic action plan. Some of the communities are just not able to avail themselves of some of those finances, in one case the recreation program requiring 50% of the funds.

Could the member comment on how quickly the money must be spent and just how damaging it could be for some of these smaller communities?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that when the original national infrastructure program came into place in 1994, it was one-third, one-third and one-third and there was not one municipality in Canada that could not bring that money forth.

We are looking at projects, usually in a five year or ten year capital forecast, that are elevated. When we are talking about 50%, particularly for some small communities, and I know in the member's riding in wonderful places like Gander, it is very difficult.

Recreation is a really important component, whether it is dealing with recreational centres or tourism. That 50% was very harsh for many of those smaller municipalities. In addition, the time frame was very short. They have to ante up the dollars. Many municipalities right now are going through a very difficult period because of job losses, et cetera. They do not have the same tax base. Although they would like to take the opportunity, they cannot take advantage of it.

Therefore, the one-third, one-third, one-third was very transparent. Also the Liberal government sent the gas tax directly to municipalities. If that had been done by the Conservative government, we would have seen much more effective infrastructure development because the money would have been there.

Talk about shadow boxing, those guys must have taken their instructions from the NDP. When it comes to shadow boxing, I cannot tell the House of very many mayors who really have seen the dollars. What they have seen is promises and promises, but they have not seen the money.

Municipal governments will not go forward and start to give out contracts if the money is not in the bank. It is just not doable.

• (1250)

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to remind the hon. member that these high deficits and debts actually started with the former prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. The current leader of that party says that he is cut from the same cloth. He is a tax and spend Liberal. In fact, the Liberal Party dumped \$25 billion in costs on the provinces to reduce the deficit.

Will the hon. member support our 2010 budget in which we will not dump these costs on the provinces and municipalities?

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I guess we need an anthropologist to come look at where the backbone is over there.

He mentioned Pierre Trudeau. Why do we not go back to Sir John A. when we had the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway? The reality is the fastest time for deficit was during the Mulroney time, although those fellows were not very close to Brian Mulroney.

However, I would point out that it was the deficit in 1993, and I will do this slowly, when 33¢ of every \$1 spent was borrowed money, so it was not real money. I do not know how they run their households, but in mine if I spent 33¢ that was not really mine, I would be in a lot of trouble.

We had to deal with that and, yes, we made some tough choices. However, I would also point out that the provinces have the same expenditure power as the federal government, if not more. I was in municipal government. People like to say, "Let somebody else spend the money, give me the money". It does not work that way.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I spoke to the Conservative government's budget when it was first tabled in the House. Unfortunately, I will not have the opportunity today to go into detail again about what a profoundly negative impact it will have on seniors and hard-working Canadians. Let me just reiterate some of the key points, though, that I raised last month.

Budgets are always about choices. The Conservative government chose to help its wealthy friends. It chose to continue its multi-billion dollar corporate tax giveaway to big banks and profitable corporations. In doing so, it also chose to abandon hard-working Canadians and seniors.

There is no doubt that the innocent victims of the global recession of 2008-09 were seniors and the middle class. A cyclone ripped through Canada's job market, leaving over 1.5 million officially unemployed. Of those, 810,000 of those are poised to run out of employment insurance benefits in the coming months and thousands already have. Without jobs to greet them, the majority will wind up on welfare rolls, or worse.

Government Orders

What should Canadians have been able to expect from their government? A plan to get Canada working again. Clearly, the status quo is not good enough. Full-time job growth has been sluggish, at best. Canada's unemployed are competing in an ever smaller job market. Over the past year, Canada added only 55,000 new part-time jobs and 119,000 new temporary jobs. Without a good job, well-paying, with benefits and reliable hours, life becomes harder to plan, mortgages harder to pay, loans harder to diminish and savings harder to tuck away.

In short, Canada's job crisis represents a new threat to the sustainability of Canada's middle class. It is the government's job to get serious about job protection and job creation. However, instead, the budget freezes public sector operations, creating new job losses in the federal public sector and thereby compromising the food we eat, the health of our environment, transportation safety and the public services on which Canadians rely.

In one fell swoop, the Conservatives have managed to weaken the economy and hurt Canadians. That is why nothing is more egregious in this budget bill than the government's policy of continuing tax cuts to the big banks and profitable corporations. Canada's corporate tax rates are already well below those of our main competitor, namely, the United States, yet the government will continue to enrich its corporate friends.

The Parliamentary Budget Office estimates a \$19 billion structural deficit in three years, \$15 billion of that deficit will be the cost of corporate tax cuts. All of that, without a shred of evidence that those tax cuts have led to private sector investments in job creation.

To add insult to injury, since Liberal and Conservative governments started cutting corporate taxes 10 years ago, individuals are carrying 61% of the cost of government programs, while corporations now pay only 15%. It is clearly time to recalibrate.

Instead of spending \$6 billion on further corporate tax cuts, the government should have sustained its stimulus spending to create jobs. Both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have warned governments that withdrawing their stimulus packages too quickly could trigger another global recessionary dip. By cutting the stimulus package off too soon, the Conservatives are letting the jobless fend for themselves and letting the economy simply drift toward recovery. That is not nearly good enough.

On the contrary, the \$6 billion that are currently targeted to further corporate tax cuts should have been invested in improving Canada's crumbling physical infrastructure and enhancing its social infrastructure. This could be a win-win. Investments in cities, health care, child care and affordable housing would create jobs and leave our communities more functional and vibrant as a result. Imagine what a boon to the steel and construction industries a serious investment on infrastructure could be. As we replace obsolete infrastructure, we can transform Canada's economic base to a more energy efficient platform because we would not have to choose between what is good for the economy and what is good for the environment.

To a city like my home town of Hamilton, that is absolutely crucial. The recession has hit through our community with the force of a cyclone, leaving a devastating trail of joblessness in its wake. Just in the last two months, Siemens and Lakeport announced their

plans to move their operations out of Hamilton, taking hundreds more family-sustaining jobs with them. In a city that was once known as "Steeltown", only two of the city's ten largest employers are now private sector companies. The impact of those job losses is being felt at every level of our community.

First, is the high rate of unemployment, with workers increasingly running out of EI. This places an additional burden on the city's welfare rolls and the city is already cash-strapped.

• (1255)

The companies that are closing their doors are now no longer paying property taxes to municipalities, a loss that cannot be compensated for by the public sector because employers such as hospitals and post-secondary schools are exempt from paying property taxes to municipalities. This puts the burden for the cost of municipal services squarely on the shoulders of residential property taxpayers, the very people who are losing their jobs. It is a downward spiral with no end in sight.

The only way to reverse the trend is through a positive intervention by senior levels of government. Regrettably, to date, instead of assisting through stimulus spending, they have shown a propensity to download costs instead. This budget bill could have redressed that balance, but shamefully, the Conservatives have failed to do so in any meaningful way.

Job creation is not the only area in which the government has failed to show leadership when it comes to transitioning from one of the worst recessions on record into a more sustainable economy that benefits all Canadians. Just ask the over 1.5 million Canadians who have lost their jobs. The Conservatives' first order of business should have been to stave off the crisis awaiting the 810,000 EI recipients who are poised to run out of benefits in the coming months.

I was proud to table a comprehensive motion on EI reform in the House over a year ago. That motion was passed by a majority vote of MPs and yet benefits still have not been extended or expanded in a comprehensive way to help those Canadians who are struggling in this very tough job market. It is absolutely imperative that we act to protect the jobless. There is no time to waste. The future of entire families literally hangs in the balance.

The future of seniors, the very Canadians who built our country, similarly hangs in the balance. I wish I had time today to speak at length about the government's inaction on lifting seniors out of poverty, improving the CPP and securing workplace pensions. Thankfully, I have had many other opportunities to raise those issues in this House.

Government Orders

Today I have only 10 minutes left to speak, so I am going to address two very specific issues that I have not been able to raise before. It is tough to narrow it down to just two. The budget implementation bill covers everything from a new airline tax to debit and credit cards, to softwood lumber products, to eliminating purely cosmetic procedures from the medical expense tax credit. They all deserve detailed attention, but it is simply impossible to do justice to the entire bill that is before us today.

It is a massive piece of legislation that, under normal circumstances, would have been presented as a number of smaller bills. However, the government knows it would never be able to pass its agenda if it were introduced piecemeal. Since the Liberals have said that they would allow the budget to pass no matter what was in it, the Conservatives have seized the opportunity and left us with a Trojan Horse.

As I said earlier, I will focus on two specific areas that are buried deep within the verbiage of the budget implementation bill that absolutely must be exposed.

The first deals with Canada Post. In essence, this part of the budget implementation bill would remove Canada Post's legal monopoly on outgoing international letters. This was first proposed by the Liberal member for Eglinton—Lawrence when the Liberals were in government. Since then, the Conservative government has twice tried to get these same provisions through the House of Commons, once as Bill C-14 in the second session of the last Parliament, and most recently as Bill C-44 in the last session of this Parliament. On both occasions the entrenched opposition by New Democrats forced the government to back down.

Recognizing that the bill would not get quick passage by Parliament, the government has now snuck it into the budget implementation bill. Surely, it does not belong there.

Right now Canada Post has the “exclusive privilege” to collect, transmit and deliver letters, including international letters, in order to finance the post office's universal service obligation. It is this privilege which guarantees the source of revenue that Canada Post requires to ensure the universality of services that it is mandated to provide.

In granting Canada Post an exclusive privilege, Parliament understood that market forces alone could not guarantee a reasonable level of service at affordable prices to all Canadians, particularly to those living in remote and rural parts of the country. Canada Post needs revenues from commercial bulk mail in order to subsidize other operations, such as rural mail delivery, and to keep postal rates low.

At the moment, Canada has one of the lowest standard letter rates in the industrialized world. Our postal services are universal and affordable, which is no small feat in the second largest country in the world. It will become increasingly difficult, however, for our public postal office to provide affordable service to everyone no matter where one lives if the government erodes the very mechanism that funds universal postal service, the exclusive privilege to deliver letters.

● (1300)

And yes, that issue matters, not just for the benefit of uniform affordable postal rates, but for a broad range of other benefits as well. In fact, rather than reiterate all of them here, I would commend to all members of the House the submission by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers to the Canada Post Corporation strategic review. It does a superb job of detailing why exclusive privilege is crucial to ensuring uniform rates across the country, why postage rates for both the public and small businesses will increase as a result of deregulation, why deregulation inevitably leads to service cutbacks, why exclusive privilege promotes efficiency and lower costs, why it promotes security of mail, and why deregulation is not a requirement for success.

With the limited time available to members to participate in today's debate, it is impossible for me to speak to each of these in detail, but there are a couple of concerns that I do want to highlight.

First, as climate change continues to be a key priority for Canadians, even if it is not for the government, it is imperative that we evaluate every decision we make as legislators by analyzing the environmental harm or benefit that will flow from our actions.

Let us look at the deregulation of Canada Post from that perspective for a moment. Greater competition in letter delivery would create more environmental problems, period. There is a direct and inverse relationship between increased delivery density and use of fossil fuels, pollution and traffic congestion. It only makes sense. In a deregulated market, the same number of letters would be delivered to the same points of call but by more vehicles.

Is that really a direction we could support at a time when more and more Canadians believe that climate change is the single most important issue facing our planet? I know that we in the NDP would certainly say that we cannot. We cannot and will not support an initiative that would further erode our international reputation on the environment. We cannot and will not sell out our children's future.

The same is true for the other impact of deregulation that I want to highlight next, which is the impact on decent family-sustaining jobs. In Canada, urban postal workers earn slightly more than the average industrial wage which in turn is more than twice the rate of the minimum wage. The vast majority of hours are worked by regular staff which has benefit costs of approximately 40% of wages.

There is every reason to believe that both the quantity and quality of jobs, as well as the wages and benefits of postal workers would decline should the exclusive privilege be eliminated and low-wage competition introduced.

Government Orders

First, the financial crisis resulting from reduced volumes and revenues would leave fewer funds available for wages and benefits. Second, the workforce of the competitors would receive much less pay and benefits, and would be required to work with inferior conditions. Third, service reductions would reduce career opportunities for employees. Fourth, increased competition coupled with reduced volumes and financial losses would create insecurity and greater resistance to negotiated provisions, such as pensions and retiree benefits that require long-term stability in the sector. Fifth, the experiences of other countries, such as Sweden, New Zealand, the U. K. and Germany, show that deregulation is primarily about putting pressure on the wages, benefits and protections of the postal workers.

As I look across the way in this House I can tell that some members are actually looking forward to and indeed celebrating that decline in wages and benefits. I am really surprised, although I guess I should not be. It is, after all, deeply rooted in their ideological belief that living wages are just another encumbrance on what should be the unfettered ability of businesses to make unlimited profits, and yet that value system lacks all credibility.

Even the Conservatives' own approach to fighting the current economic downturn underscores the shortcomings of their ideology. One of the key elements to surviving this recession is to shore up consumer confidence so that Canadians will once again spend their money and stimulate our economy. That can only happen if workers have sufficient incomes to purchase cars, appliances, and a host of other manufactured goods. It is the production of those goods that protects jobs in the auto sector, the parts industry, the manufacturing sector and in small businesses across our country.

We need decent paying jobs to support Canadian families and to support Canadian jobs. There is absolutely no way that a pay cut for unionized workers would make minimum wage workers better off. It would simply make all of us worse off. In a country that has high unemployment, unacceptable levels of child poverty and a growing number of seniors who can no longer make ends meet, we must do everything we can to turn our economy around. Sustaining decent jobs for decent wages must be valued as a critical part of that solution.

• (1305)

That issue of sustainability leads me to the second hidden assault within the budget implementation bill's Trojan Horse, and that is the impact on environmental assessments. When thinking of tar sands, mining and upgrading pipelines, refineries, copper mines and gold mines, most Canadians would agree that projects of that scale pose potentially significant impacts on the environment. Yet, if the sweeping changes buried in the budget implementation bill that is before us today are passed, these and thousands of other projects could escape meaningful federal environmental assessments. The result would turn a blind eye to federal responsibilities to address transboundary air pollution and to protect transboundary waters, fisheries and aboriginal peoples and their lands.

Buried deep within the budget implementation bill are provisions that grant the federal environment minister unprecedented powers to narrow the scope of any environmental assessment. The majority of projects receiving federal stimulus spending would also be exempted

from federal review regardless of their potential impacts on communities, waterways, wildlife or ecosystems, and the public's right to participate effectively in project reviews would be dramatically curtailed.

Worse, these drastic changes to federal assessment law are being made under cover of the budget mere months before a mandatory parliamentary review of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is to begin. This removes any opportunity for public engagement. It is the second time the Conservative government has resorted to a backdoor manoeuvre to undermine environmental laws. In the 2009 budget, the Conservatives significantly reduced federal duties to assess project impacts by eviscerating the Navigable Waters Protection Act. That action drew outrage from Canadians right across the country.

The government defends these drastic cuts to federal environmental oversight by arguing that the provinces have demanded them. Yet, claims of duplication and overlap fly in the face of measures taken over three decades by both orders of government to eliminate duplication or delays through administrative agreements and coordinated reviews.

Federal assessments have long been limited to federal areas of responsibility, such as impacts on fisheries, national parks, aboriginal lands or waterways, areas in which only the federal government has the power to regulate. The decision to remove federal assessments defies successive decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada, upholding federal jurisdiction and responsibilities for the environment.

The effect of these legislative reforms is to diminish federal powers without need of constitutional reform, a move some provinces have sought for decades. It serves a dangerously shortsighted agenda, pitting the interests of major industrial projects against the environment and interests of future generations. New Democrats believe that Canada is at a crossroads. We can choose the Conservatives' regressive agenda or we can ensure that environmental and social impacts are addressed in all economic development.

Canadians in communities across the country are choosing a cleaner energy path. Workers are upgrading their training, hoping to pursue emerging job opportunities in the environmental field. Researchers are exploring innovative responses to address pollution and climate change. Entrepreneurs have launched energy retrofit and renewable energy generation enterprises that could make Canada competitive in the new green economy. As the Conference Board of Canada detailed in its March report, the global market for technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions is exploding, but Canada has failed to capitalize on opportunities.

Government Orders

What is missing is the federal government's resolve to provide the necessary regulatory triggers and fiscal incentives. Instead of seizing the moment, the budget implementation bill is replete with missed opportunities: missed opportunities on job protection and creation, missed opportunities on the environment, and missed opportunities to create a sustainable future for our children. If politics were baseball, three strikes would mean the government is out. Where is an umpire when we need one?

● (1310)

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in their typical underhanded way through chicanery and trickery, the Conservatives have included a provision in the budget implementation bill that would erode the exclusive privilege of Canada Post, an exclusive privilege that was upheld through the upper courts, and would allow international remailers into the business.

Does the member for Hamilton Mountain believe that this action would lead incrementally toward the further deregulation and privatization of other crown corporations? This action is starting with Canada Post. Could she elaborate on this slippery slope the government is on and whether this would leave behind \$80 million of business on the table?

What is the government's true agenda? Does the member think this slippery slope the government is on would lead to further deregulation and privatization of other crown corporations?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Yes, this is the slippery slope not just to further deregulation but, I would suggest, to the ultimate privatization of Canada Post. I am a bit surprised, though, that the member would ask that question because it was her colleague, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, who started us down that slippery slope when he was a cabinet minister in the past Liberal government. This bill is one that the Liberals had to first propose. Now it has been picked up by the Conservative government. In fact the agenda of both parties when it comes to Canada Post is very much the same.

I find it a bit surprising that the member is standing today sounding almost sympathetic to trying to put an end to this, yet it is her party that is not putting up members in enough numbers to actually stop the budget from passing. She and her party have it within their power to stop this slippery slide from happening, and yet they are sending enough people out of the House to ensure that the Conservative agenda, including the Canada Post piece, passes unamended.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am shocked to hear the NDP say that they are opposing remailing in this country. In fact remailers have been doing business in this country for some 20 years and the only reason it became an issue was because of a conflict in wording in the Canada Post Act. I do not know if the member knows that. There is a difference between the French and English wording in the act. It went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and that court determined that the French version would prevail, which seemed to indicate that Canada Post did have an exclusive privilege even on international mail.

We stepped in right away to address that anomaly, because if the NDP has its way, thousands of Canadians will lose their jobs in the

remailing industry. This has nothing to do with a slippery slope. This has nothing to do with trying to defend Canada Post's exclusive privilege. This is a business that even Canada Post accepted as legitimate for 20 years. Even its president said so. I have a document in writing from her stating that.

I would ask the NDP member why it is that she wants to put thousands of Canadians out of work with her ill-founded suggestion.

● (1315)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that I am absolutely delighted that, when we have an 880-page budget implementation act before us here today, we have finally been able to draw attention to the fact that the start of the privatization and deregulation process of Canada Post has actually been snuck into the budget bill. After making my speech, the first two questions have both been on Canada Post, and I want to thank both members for making sure the issues pertaining to Canada Post finally get a bit of a hearing.

First of all, I do not agree at all with the member opposite's assumptions in terms of the genesis of the bill, nor in terms of its impact, because for me the bottom line is decent-paying, family-sustaining jobs, not just any old jobs at barely minimum wage. I want to make sure, frankly, that those jobs stay in this country as well, but if the member is so certain that his case can reasonably be made, why would Conservatives sneak this part of the bill into the budget bill? Why not have open public hearings so that we can have workers from CUPW and interested stakeholders like small business all participate and make their views heard?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for her speech today, and certainly the reaction she is getting indicates she is making a very controversial point and winning the argument hands down.

As the member said, the bill is 880 pages long. We are talking about an omnibus bill. We are talking about a sneaky government, sneaking in things that it does not make sense to put into a budget bill. We are talking about the post office remailers that were brought in twice already by the Conservatives. They cannot get the bill through the House, so they have snuck it through under a budget bill and declared it a confidence vote.

I know the member has been involved for years supporting seniors and looking at seniors' issues and she is very interested in the whole issue with seniors and the CPP and issues related to the improvement of workplace pensions in this country and a better life for seniors in their retirement. What does the budget do for seniors?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, it is very tempting just to answer with two words and say, "Absolutely nothing", but that would not be doing a service to the member for Elmwood—Transcona, who I know shares my concern and indeed the concern of every member of the NDP caucus about the short shrift seniors got in this 880-page budget implementation document.

Government Orders

It was a real opportunity, through the entire budget process, to do right by seniors. As I said earlier, this budget made choices. The government chose to spend \$6 billion additional dollars on corporate tax cuts to banks and profitable corporations. It would have only taken \$700 million to lift every single Canadian senior out of poverty. Do we find those improvements to the GIS anywhere in the budget or the budget implementation bill? Absolutely not. Why not? It is because the government made the wrong choice.

We had a motion before this House that dealt with comprehensive reforms to pension plans. It was not adopted. The finance minister says he still has to go out and listen. Why does he not listen to the 308 representatives of Canadian seniors in this House and act on pension reform today?

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring up an issue the member talked about briefly regarding pensions.

I am not talking about the public pensions available through OAS, GIS or even the Canada pension plan at this point. I would like her to comment on the security of those who are involved in the supplementary industry, to supplement their pension plans through donation, through RRSPs, or through their own company pension plans, because now we have a question of security. The value of these pensions pooled together has now decreased substantially over the past two years. I speak of Nortel and AbitibiBowater as two fine examples.

Could she comment on what was sorely lacking in this budget regarding those who took advantage of and are part of the supplementary pension system, by allowing them to contribute and to achieve that security they need after 65 years of age?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Only a third of Canadians right now have workplace pensions, and many of those workplace pension plans are underfunded and in jeopardy. We saw it most recently, as the member rightly points out, with AbitibiBowater and with Nortel.

That is one of the reasons why the very first bill I had the privilege of introducing in this House, when I first got elected in 2006, was a bill to protect workers' pensions and put them at the head of the line in cases of commercial bankruptcy. Two of my colleagues, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek as well as one of our Thunder Bay members, introduced similar legislation that also focused on pension protection for workers who are impacted by commercial bankruptcies. These bills are absolutely critical.

There is a third piece though. There are public pensions and workplace pensions, and there is a third piece of the Canada pension system that we also need to focus on. The member referenced it in his question, the RRSP component. I wonder how many members in this House realize that one of the things in this budget implementation bill that is before the House today would actually retroactively charge the GST to commissions that are paid on holdings in an RRSP account. It is absolutely insane.

This budget literally takes leaps backwards instead of tiny steps forward in terms of helping those people who built our country to live their retirements with dignity and respect.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech and she is right on several counts, particularly concerning the fact that this budget does not fulfill the goals of Quebeckers and Canadians.

This is confirmed by the fact that, in all 880 pages of the budget implementation bill, there is absolutely nothing for women. I have to wonder what this government has against women. Why does it refuse to recognize 52% of the population, and always prepare budgets, and budget implementation bills that completely ignore this segment of the population?

Worse still, we submitted some very sensible, very pertinent proposals to the government concerning certain issues. None of our proposals appears in the 2010-11 budget implementation bill. Freezing the salaries of MPs and senators does not matter all that much. However, refusing to improve access to employment insurance for our workers is indeed a serious matter. It is appalling.

I did not see a single measure in this budget that would allow me to believe that the government has learned anything over the past two years, that it learned anything from the presentations and demands—made before various committees—to restore certain programs and measures that were cut over the past four years. Women are the big losers in budget 2010-11.

If this budget had included a section telling us that the court challenges program was being restored, that would have made it much more interesting. If it had included measures to bring back the 16 Status of Women offices, we could have found something positive in this budget; but it does not contain any of that.

The budget included money for first nations women, specifically, for the Sisters in Spirit initiative. However, we do not know where that money will go. We do not know if the Sisters in Spirit program will benefit from it, or if the Department of Justice or Department of Public Safety will develop projects or programs using that money as they see fit. It would have been interesting to get more details.

We also saw that instead of making it easier for people to access employment insurance benefits, the government is going to take the money from the EI fund, just as it did in 1995, a total of \$57 billion as of March 30. Once again, the government is going to rob those who work five, six or seven days a week to make a living. Once again, the government is taking the money they invested in the EI fund to protect themselves against layoffs and hard times. They will not have access to that money.

It is hard to believe that the government has people's best interests at heart when it says it is going to allow Canada Post to privatize some of its services. I have a hard time believing that this is a good thing.

Government Orders

I have a hard time believing that the caisses populaires Desjardins—of which I have been a member for many years and where I do my banking—want to have to have a federal charter to keep doing business. We are told that this would be done on a voluntary basis. But we know that when the government says something is being done on a voluntary basis in the financial markets, the word “voluntary” does not have the same meaning.

• (1325)

It is possible to be caught in a vise and forced to meet certain criteria. The caisses populaires Desjardins might have to comply with these new rules. Certainly, the banks would not agree to let the caisses populaires Desjardins keep on selling insurance and to allow Quebec to keep the system it has.

The budget does nothing to fulfill Quebecers' goals, let alone those of Canadians. We heard this repeatedly at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. People came to testify about the Canada and Quebec pension plans. They told us time and time again that the plans were not designed to meet women's needs. And the budget does nothing to fix that.

The only women who have access to a valid pension plan are the ones who work in the public sector. Women who work in other sectors, including the private sector, do not have access to a pension plan that allows them to retire at 65. They will not have the money they need to live comfortably in retirement.

Clearly, we cannot ensure that everyone enjoys a comfortable retirement, but we can at least ensure that they have access to some retirement income.

The budget implementation bill does not have a lot to offer to Quebec's forestry and manufacturing industries or to our farmers and our children. However, it does encroach on Quebec's jurisdiction over health by investing in the Rick Hansen Foundation and over education by investing in the pathways to education program.

Rather than continue to encroach on those areas of jurisdiction, the government should ensure that provincial transfers are carried out properly, which is not the case right now. Quebec is short \$663 million because the government did not transfer enough funds for the province to meet its needs.

It is true that Quebec has superior social programs. We pay taxes so that we can benefit from these superior social programs, and we are very proud of them. Quebecers have access to preventive withdrawal and parental leave. Last year alone, 86,000 children were born in Quebec. It has been a long time since there have been so many births in Quebec. Mr. Speaker, I know that you are a big proponent of families. You have several children of your own.

All of that is because of the social programs we set up. We make different social choices.

The federal government should not punish us for making those social choices. It should not restrict transfers to Quebec. We are entitled to that money. Like everyone else in Canada, we help create wealth. We pay all of our taxes, and the government should give the provinces, including Quebec, their due, which it is not doing now.

The Bloc Québécois will not hesitate to vote against the budget implementation bill, as it always does.

• (1330)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would my hon. colleague expand upon the situation within the forestry sector? The Quebec government did something unprecedented across the country when it provided loan guarantees for AbitibiBowater. I think the dollar amount was around \$100 million. This created a situation where it was directly involved in helping to save jobs.

A lot of people would complain that the federal government in this particular situation did not take similar measures to get directly involved in jobs in the forestry sector across the entire country. I would like my colleague to illustrate that. Also, exactly what policy measures in forestry was she disappointed in not seeing in this implementation act?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. In fact, this time the federal government has not met the expectations of the Quebec forestry industry.

We know very well that the government is now attempting to recover some money. The London and American tribunals ruled that Canada had to pay additional charges on surplus softwood lumber shipments. But rather than making certain laws and taking certain action, we must be assured that the forestry industry has the money required to grow, and to change its way of doing things and upgrade its equipment.

All the measures currently in place have not made it possible for the industry to recover, to continue to grow and to provide jobs for Quebecers working in this industry.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her presentation today on this 880 page Bill C-9 and for her terrific speech this morning on private member's Bill C-471.

She also made a presentation to the House on June 11, 2009, in which she talked about equal pay for women. She pointed out that women reach retirement age without being able to benefit fully from the income they ought to have had. She stated that at the present time women are paid 70% to 80% of what men are paid, so all of their working lives they are carrying with them a 20% to 30% shortfall. Therefore, when they get to retirement, they receive approximately 42% of what they earned when they were working and are missing a huge amount.

In other words, it is not just an issue of earning less money throughout their working lives. It shows up again in the pensions they receive in their 20 or 30 years of retirement. The government has not taken initiatives or any measures in this 880 page bill to deal with the pension issues of retired Canadians.

Would the member like to expand on that area?

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and remind him that the Quebec pension plan allows women who choose to stay home to raise their children to exclude seven years from their pension calculation. However, the federal government does not—but should—recognize the work women do to ensure that their spouse or another family member in failing health can remain at home.

We know that most women my age, 60, will have to stop working and end their career to take care of a parent or a child who is sick if they do not want their relative to be placed in the hospital system or a CHSLD.

It is very important that these people be credited with a period of time in order that they may benefit from a fair pension.

My colleague is also correct when he says that women still earn only 70% or 72% of what men earn. This has repercussions not only in terms of hours worked, but also in terms of the weeks and months worked. At the end of the year, a woman has worked less than a man. That is true because although family responsibilities are shared a bit better than they were 50 years ago, most family responsibilities still fall to women.

• (1335)

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to speak to the budget today.

Two years ago, the finance minister asked MPs to come forward with prebudget submissions based on inputs from their constituents. In the spirit of co-operation, and given the economic crisis, I submitted to the minister an extensive list of projects. I am pleased to say that the government did help with a couple of the projects, the Northside Civic Centre and the Marine Atlantic.

However, for the most part, the government ignored the requests of community leaders in my area. In my submission I challenged the government as follows:

This is a challenge to the federal government not for frivolous spending or make work projects; but rather it's a chance to live up to its duty as a national government by providing all regions and individuals with an opportunity to compete and succeed.

Basically what we asked for was not a handout but rather an investment in our strengths.

As a farmer and a chair of our rural caucus, I saw very quickly and clearly what was missing in this budget: the lost opportunities, especially for rural Canada. When we view the estimates over the last couple of weeks, we see that the agriculture budget has not increased. We see the problems with the hog farmers and the beef farmers who are in desperate shape but there was no increase in the budget and the funding for a lot of the programs was cut, which was very troubling for the agricultural industry.

Then we have the forestry industry. We see no measurable assistance for all those industries in all those towns right across the country that rely on the forestry industry.

Closer to my region is the fishing industry and, in particular, the lobster fishing industry. The amount of assistance it has been

receiving is a joke. I have an article from last week's *Cape Breton Post* assessing this programs as it has been winding down. This program to help lobster fishers sounded so great at the front end but many of them had their income cut in half last year. The article reads:

...impossible eligibility rules prevented thousands of lobster fishermen from accessing up to \$5,000 each under a \$15-million federal program.

The short-term transitional measures program was announced last year to help low-income lobster licence holders hit hard by the global economic downturn between 2007 and 2009. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans said Thursday that 1,705 applications...

Now 1,700 applications sound like a lot but there are 10,000 fishers out there with 10,000 lobster licences. Now if we take the 10,000, it means that 25,000 families rely on the lobster fishery in Atlantic Canada and Quebec. Therefore, only 1,700 could really get any money from it and were approved for the program. That was until the end of March.

This is a \$1 billion industry. I am just guessing that roughly \$300 million were lost in the industry and only \$8.5 million was paid out. Only 57% of the total available funding, not even the full funding allocation, was sent out. The remaining \$6.5 million will go back to general revenues. It is disgraceful.

I have a quote in the article from Josephine Kennedy, a representative for multi-species licence holders in northeast Cape Breton, who said, "Everybody along this shore were down between \$20,000 and \$25,000 less income (from lobster) in 2009 from 2008".

\$20,000 to \$25,000 is a lot of money lost. She went on to say, "...the way they put the rules out there for it, they made it virtually impossible".

For fishers on the rural side and for Atlantic Canada and Quebec it was a total disgrace. For the rural community, the government could have sent something.

Two weeks ago we had a representative from the firefighters here. In rural Canada, volunteer fire departments are crucial for all these small towns. For years the government has been asked for a bit of a tax credit for these men and women who volunteer their time to keep rural communities safe and the communities together. That tax credit for volunteer firefighters could have been a win-win for the current government but, no, it is just another lost opportunity.

• (1340)

As many members in this chamber know, in 1949 Newfoundland became part of the Dominion of Canada, the Confederation. It joined with this country. So we had a country that extended from the east coast to the west coast. When the declaration documents were signed in 1949, it was declared very specifically that vital links between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland had to be maintained with ferry services for goods and passengers.

Government Orders

Over the last year, the service has not been great. We saw delays in passenger service. That happens sometimes because it is a hard crossing, but it has been more than we have ever seen before. Truckers delivering perishable products, such as fresh meat and produce, from North Sydney to Newfoundland, were stuck in lineups that were kilometres long and, more important, fresh fish coming back from Newfoundland was waiting on the other side. There were many delays in the service. The ferry service needs a major infusion of money over the new few years. Even the Auditor General has stated this.

Yes, there is some money there, \$175 million, but it is going to need almost \$1 billion over 10 years. The Shipbuilding Association states that a ship can be built here in Canada, that we might have to get some parts from Finland or Korea but, at the end of the day, most of the ferries can be built here. But, no, instead of building a ship here in Canada, what are we going to do? We are going to lease ships from Europe. If we lease these ships, then we have a problem because we have to upgrade the docks. I know it is good that there is money for Marine Atlantic, but we need a ship that is built in Canada.

As many members in this chamber know, Cape Breton took a hard hit in 2000 when we lost the coal and steel industries. However, the Liberals, under Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, put a lot of money into that area to help boost the economy. We had the growth fund for cleaning up the tar ponds. However, when the Conservatives got in, we saw the money dwindling. They had such great opportunities there. We just lost our auto industry over the last year. We had expected to get some money in Cape Breton. Money came to central Canada for its auto industry but, no, there was another lost opportunity there with no investment.

One of the biggest priorities now in Sydney, Cape Breton, is to dredge the harbour. The harbour has been a vital link from Canada to Europe for many years, especially in the world wars. So, one of the priorities for Cape Breton is to dredge its harbour. The harbour authority came out with a firm that is going to do it this summer. It has the money. It has the quote. But what we need is for the current government to step up to the plate and invest in it to dredge that harbour. It has the gateway money there. It is holding on to it. It should step up to the plate and tell the people in Sydney and the port authority to come forward and get some money to get that harbour dredged.

It is bad enough that the money is not being invested many times, but what is really discouraging is what has been happening over the last few weeks concerning citizenship and immigration jobs. We have over 150 employees who work in Sydney who process citizenship and immigration forms, and they do a tremendous job. There are almost 250,000 immigrants who come to this country each year. The immigrants are going to keep coming to this country. Sydney did a great job of processing their applications. But what did the Conservatives do? They laid off 150 people in that riding. It is just disgraceful. We are going to see another backlog of citizenship and immigration applications. They are coming to town tomorrow to appear before the committee to state their case and state the impacts it will have on the rest of the country.

That kind of sums up this fancy book the Conservatives came out with, "Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth". There is some stuff in

here but, overall, it has not been good for Cape Breton. This budget is a lot of talk, but there is not much walk.

• (1345)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member.

During her speech, the member for Laval said that the budget that is about to be implemented completely ignored half of the population, since it does not do anything for women.

Not only does it have nothing for women, but the budget also ensures that women will no longer be able to achieve pay equity through the courts. My colleague's party is once again prepared to vote against implementing the budget, but not to actually defeat it. The Liberals will abstain from voting, as they did for the budget itself.

How does my colleague explain such deceitful behaviour to his constituents? How does he explain that today, his leader introduced Bill C-471, which aims to provide pay equity for women, but will then see to it that this equity is not enforced?

[*English*]

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I have a history. We have worked together on many issues in the House, particularly on inequalities. I put forward a bill on helping people to get through illnesses by giving them EI.

The gist of my comments today were about what is happening in Atlantic Canada and what is happening in Cape Breton, but there is no doubt about it. We do not need preaching by any party on how we believe in the charter of rights and the rights of every individual. We stand up again and again for them, and I will continue to do that.

The member knows that I will continue to work with him to push forward against any inequalities in this country.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. He is a Liberal, but I cannot be too mean to him because he is from Cape Breton Island. My family had to leave Cape Breton to work in the gold mines in Timmins. Those immigrants built an amazing resource that has succeeded all across northern Canada. It was built by hard-working people. We have built industries that are the envy of the world.

Then the Conservative government came along. The last time it did anything with industry was the Avro Arrow. It saw these great mines like Falconbridge and Inco and said, "Let's sell them out to some corporate raiders and let's not get any kind of commitments", because it believes blindly in the power of capital.

We have seen a devastation in our regions because of the lack of understanding on the government's part that there is a difference between foreign investment and foreign takeover.

Government Orders

We have always supported foreign investment because it has built industry, but what we are seeing under the Conservative government, which is in Bill C-9, is a change in the rules on oversight with foreign takeovers. We are leaving industries like our northern mining industries, the oil sector and telecommunications open to foreign takeovers that are undermining our ability as Canadians and as regions to maintain good, strong jobs in this country.

I would like to ask the hon. member from Cape Breton, would he not work with us to stop this turnover and deregulation move by the government against our regional industries?

Hon. Mark Eyking: Mr. Speaker, it is too bad that my colleague's family left Cape Breton and went from the coal mines to the gold mines but they are welcome back any time. Our Liberal caucus will be in Cape Breton and he is welcome to come this summer to join us and have a few brews.

More seriously, the mining industry is very important to Canada. We went through a major transition in Cape Breton where we had a government-owned mine and it did not go so well. However, now it is coming back again. We have Xstrata investing in Cape Breton. Xstrata is one of the top mining companies in the world.

Sometimes there is a balance. The government cannot be too in control of mining. It has to be the watchful eye in investment and environmental rules, but there has to be that in between where we allow investment from other countries and multi-corporations to come in. We would have no coal industry in Cape Breton if Xstrata had not stepped up to the plate and invested millions of dollars into our region.

Therefore, there is a balance and I think the Liberal balance is the right balance. There is too much free enterprise in the Conservative Party and the NDP does not have enough, so we are right down the middle.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill.

I would like to begin by saying that the Bloc Québécois will vote against this bill because it widens the gap between the rich and the middle class and the poor. This bill does not meet the Bloc Québécois' expectations or those of the people.

The Bloc Québécois is the only party that really did its homework. We consulted people in all regions of Quebec. My colleague from Hochelaga made it his mission to travel to every single region to meet representatives, opinion leaders and organizations.

The Minister of Finance ignored the economic statement we presented even though it laid out options for additional resources for the government without compromising the social safety net. In our statement, we suggested that the wealthy should contribute more via a 2% tax increase for those earning \$150,000 or more per year and a 3% tax increase for those earning \$250,000 or more. Higher taxes on high-income earners would bring in \$4.8 billion in additional revenue for the government.

The same applies to tax havens. There are still too many companies, organizations and individuals who use tax havens to

avoid paying their fair share of taxes. That is additional money the government could have collected.

Instead, the government chose to adopt measures that affect the middle class and low-income earners and to chip away at the social safety net and existing social measures, including a very precious means of communication, Canada's postal system. The subject barely came up here today, but the government began the process to privatize the Canada Post Corporation. That is unacceptable because the Canadian postal system plays an important role in society in general.

In this budget, the government is also seeking to subject credit unions like the Desjardins Group to federal authority. Initially, that would be voluntary. The government always introduces voluntary measures to soften up those concerned about the status of these institutions, but it wants to gradually bring such institutions under a Canadian entity exclusively. That is totally unacceptable.

Another serious issue is that the government wants to make plundering the employment insurance fund official. This diversion of funds over the past 14 years, first by the Liberal Party and then by the Conservative Party, represents more than \$57 billion.

When the Supreme Court ruled on how the employment insurance fund is used, it recognized the fact that this money belongs to the contributors. The government can use it for other purposes, but it still has to understand that the money belongs to the contributors.

• (1355)

They are preparing to make this theft official by changing how the fund is administered, and the Liberals will be their accomplices. The Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board will become the employment insurance operating account, and the fund will start all over again at zero. It is as though this diversion of funds never happened. Doing this would allow the current government to make use of the employment insurance fund surplus from 2012 to 2015, to the tune of \$19 billion. The \$57 billion will be erased with a single vote in the House and the Liberals will be the accomplices. I hope that my Liberal colleagues realize that they will also be accomplices in the future diversion of \$19 billion.

Those who support the unemployed—the major unions, unemployment organizations and, of course, the unemployed themselves—have always been unanimous. They all agree that the system no longer corresponds to their reality. It is no longer helpful or inclusive, it is exclusive. More than 54% of the people unemployed today cannot receive benefits.

Yet these people contributed to an employment insurance fund, which is basically insurance should they have the misfortune of losing their jobs. They put money into this fund specifically to be able to receive benefits to continue supporting their families and meeting their obligations if they lose their jobs.

People need to know that voting for Bill C-9 constitutes, in my mind, a serious economic crime against people who have lost their jobs. Not only would this deprive workers of an income, but it would also mean depriving their families. This also puts an economic burden on a certain region, or even on the provinces. Quebec will be left to take care of these people through a last resort measure: social assistance. There is something wrong with this picture.

In closing, women are those most affected: over 67% of women are excluded. This morning in the House, the Liberal Party leader introduced a bill on pay equity, which we will support, because we simply cannot oppose such a measure. However, it is a hypocritical bill, because they will say here today that they oppose Bill C-9, but they will not show up to vote against it. Yet that bill will make it impossible for women to ask the courts to recognize their right to pay equity.

That is why we will vote against the bill. We invite all our colleagues to do the same.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

DENARE BEACH WINTER FESTIVAL

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently it was my pleasure to attend the 32nd annual Denare Beach Winter Festival, which shows the true meaning of small-town northern Saskatchewan spirit. I had a wonderful time at all the activities and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with many constituents.

During the auction, I met one special constituent, Mr. Joel Olivier, a man to whom I would like to refer as the bidder. The bidder kindly raised the price of a set of binoculars I was bidding on during an auction, so I returned the bidder's favour on the next item in which he was interested: a signed Bobby Clarke print. Despite our friendly rivalry, I would like to let it be known that the bidder and I were able to enjoy a delicious pancake breakfast the next day.

I want to thank the bidder, his father Ephant Dorge, his son Ethan, and all who worked to organize this fundraiser for the Denare Beach Recreation Board. I look forward to attending the 33rd annual Denare Beach Winter Festival as this is a prime example of northern communities' pride and participation. Job well done.

* * *

TERRY FOX

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this day 30 years ago, Terry Fox stood next to St. John's harbour about to embark on his Marathon of Hope across Canada. While his run ended prematurely in Thunder Bay, the journey he began continues to this day in Terry Fox Runs around the world. From New York City to Kuala Lumpur, from Dublin to Abu Dhabi, Terry's inspirational legacy has spawned a global movement that has raised over \$500 million for cancer research.

Statements by Members

Stride by stride, town by town, Terry's heroic run showed not only the strength of one man's will to conquer a disease, but the strength of the human spirit to inspire a nation and the global community to action. Terry once said, "I just wish people would realize that anything's possible if you try; dreams are made possible if you try".

His dream, his miracle, was to run across Canada to raise money to fight cancer. He showed us all that dreams and miracles are not only possible, but within our reach. It is up to each of us to try. For Terry, we owe nothing less than that.

* * *

[Translation]

NUCLEAR SECURITY

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Washington nuclear security summit opens today. It will be attended by some 50 countries including Canada, which is being represented by the Prime Minister. Since the purpose of this meeting is to agree on ways to safeguard nuclear material that could be used to develop a nuclear bomb, it is important to question just how credible Canada actually is when it comes to nuclear security.

The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is at the very heart of the debate at this summit. Canada recently concluded an agreement on the sale of CANDU reactors with India, a country which has not signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Clearly, Canada is more interested in selling its CANDU reactors than addressing security issues.

How does this Conservative government intend to defend its position, which is indefensible considering that Canada is a signatory of the non-proliferation treaty? It is indeed important to address the problem of proliferation of weapons, but it is important that the commitments made in Washington are not made hypocritically.

* * *

[English]

POLAND

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the tragic event on Saturday, which saw the president of Poland, Lech Kaczynski, and 95 other passengers die in a plane crash near Smolensk, Russia. The group had been on its way to a memorial service in remembrance of the massacre of Polish military officers by Soviet secret police 70 years ago in the Katyn forest.

Over the last century, the Polish people have suffered from a long list of tragedies, including the Nazi invasion in 1939, the deportation and murder of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto, the Katyn massacre, and the loss of independence under the Soviet Union. Adding to that list was Saturday's dreadful plane crash, which not only claimed the life of the president, but also the lives of many family members of the victims of the Katyn massacre as well as a cross-section of Poland's political, military, business and religious leadership.

Statements by Members

It is my hope and belief that with this most recent tragedy, the strength and character of the Polish people will sustain them through the difficult days and weeks ahead as it has so many times in the past.

On behalf of my constituents, my party and all Canadians, I offer my deepest condolences to the people of Poland and the worldwide Polonia.

* * *

● (1405)

NATIONAL PARKS AND MARINE CONSERVATION AREAS

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to acknowledge the presence of a world-renowned environmentalist and true humanitarian, Dr. Jane Goodall.

When the Minister of the Environment met Dr. Goodall at the WILD9 convention last November, Canada and the world were celebrating the expansion of Nahanni National Park Reserve. Since then, our government has continued its active work toward the permanent protection of vast expanses of water, wetland, tundra and boreal forest across Canada, from the Mealy Mountains of Labrador to Lancaster Sound in Nunavut and to Haida Gwaii on the Pacific Coast.

From the birth of Canada's first national park to 2006, Canada established a system of national parks and national marine conservation areas covering 277,000 square kilometres. Our government has protected 45,000 square kilometres and has taken action to expand that by another 40,000 square kilometres. This represents an increase of an area larger than Austria.

Welcome, Dr. Jane Goodall, to Ottawa.

* * *

THE HOLOCAUST

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1933 there were nine million Jews in Europe. Half a generation later, six million had perished in the Holocaust, others had fled for their lives, and only a few hundred thousand were left.

The incalculable loss, fathers, mothers, grandparents the children never had. Children, so full of learning, so full of possibilities, never the chance to live their lives. A next generation never born, and a next.

The incalculable loss to the Jewish people; the incalculable loss to all of us.

For us, never to forget the Jews and the Jewish people. But for us, too, never to forget how easy it is to push to one side any group of people, to separate, divide, cut off, then to demonize, hate and destroy.

The Holocaust happened then and there, but the Holocaust is a forever story for all of us.

Never again, and always to remember.

ALBERTA'S LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR DESIGNATE

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister announced that retired Colonel Donald Stewart Ethell will serve as the next Lieutenant Governor of Alberta.

Colonel Ethell had a distinguished 38-year career in the Canadian Forces. His duties included serving as director of peacekeeping operations at national defence headquarters and as chief of staff and deputy force commander of the multinational force and observers during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf war. He is one of Canada's most decorated soldiers as well as a champion for veterans and the welfare of those in the world's most vulnerable nations.

Colonel Ethell is Canada's most experienced peacekeeper. He was deployed on 14 peacekeeping missions, including service in Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Central America and the Balkans.

Colonel Ethell is committed to issues that are important to Canada's veterans. He is a committee chair on the Veterans Affairs Canada-Canadian Forces Advisory Council. He is also the national president of the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping.

I am honoured to have known Colonel Ethell as a colleague and friend, and shortly will be able to call him His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta.

I know he will do all Albertans proud. I wish him and his family all the best.

* * *

[Translation]

ALUMINUM INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on April 15, a delegation representing the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area will attend the Rio Tinto annual shareholders' meeting in London. This delegation, comprised of the economist Marc-Urbain Proulx, union leaders Alain Gagnon and Marc Maltais, and myself, will voice the historical claims of my region with regard to the development of the aluminum industry.

Rio Tinto currently uses clean energy drawn from a watershed whose value is increasing. However, despite the extraordinary incentives from which the company has benefited, the level of employment in aluminum production has dropped 40% in 30 years, according to the economist Marc-Urbain Proulx.

Given that the partnership between my region and Rio Tinto is not an equitable one, the delegation will ask the corporation to provide more support to the aluminum industry.

I would also like to point out that the Conférence régionale des élus will be attending this meeting for the first time.

* * *

● (1410)

LEADER OF THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc leader spent last week touring the country to promote sovereignty.

Statements by Members

His message is as simple as it is disturbing: Canada must separate from Quebec.

Unable to convince Quebecers to separate from Canada, the Bloc leader is now saying that it is in Canada's interest to separate from Quebec.

To make sure people got his point, he even invited the province of Newfoundland and Labrador to leave Canada and become an independent country.

Clearly, the Bloc leader's priority is not the economy and jobs.

His priority is to stir up pointless old quarrels and divide a country that has never been as united as it is today.

While the Bloc leader is gallivanting about the country, we are working to stimulate the economy.

The Conservative government's solid, stable economic leadership is good for Quebecers.

* * *

[English]

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend Canadians commemorated the famous 1917 Battle of Vimy Ridge. Not far up the road from Vimy is the also famous battleground of Passchendaele, the town of Ypres and Menin Gate. A memorial at that gate pays tribute to all the Commonwealth soldiers who died at Ypres, including nearly 7,000 Canadians.

Every day at this site since 1927, the local Belgian population performs a memorial ceremony to thank those who gave their lives to secure liberty. Since 1954, the bugler at this daily ceremony has most often been Mr. Antoine Verschoot. He will turn 85 this June, but still he plays his bugle daily to thank the Canadians and others who made the ultimate sacrifice for him.

Today, we in the Canadian House of Commons say our thanks to Antoine Verschoot and to his seven current fellow buglers for their endless devotion to their Canadian liberators.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, evidence that Canada's economic action plan is working continues to mount. Statistics Canada reported that almost 18,000 new jobs were created in March. That represents the sixth month of job gains in the past eight months.

Since July 2009, Canada has created almost 180,000 new jobs. The OECD has predicted Canada's economic growth will lead the G7 this year by a wide margin. Despite the good news, our recovery remains fragile. That is why our government put forward a growth and jobs budget, which will fully implement the second year of Canada's economic action plan and roll out the remaining job creating stimulus projects across the country.

Compare that to the Liberal plan for the economy: hiking job-killing business taxes, raising the GST and imposing a carbon tax. We will stick to our plan, a plan that is having a positive effect.

PENSIONS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to ignore the systemic pension crisis facing the country, where 1.6 million Canadians are living on less than \$15,000 a year, one-third of Canadian families have no savings at all and tens of thousands of Nortel and Abitibi workers are faced with the prospect of losing the pensions they paid into their whole lives.

However, instead of taking action, the Minister of Finance is bumbling around like the cartoon character Mr. Magoo. He cannot see anything wrong because it does not fit his narrow ideological frame. Addressing the pension crisis is not rocket science. All it takes is political backbone: eliminate seniors poverty by increasing the guaranteed income supplement; work with the provinces to phase in an increase to CPP benefits; and amend the bankruptcy laws to protect unfunded pension liabilities.

The New Democrats will continue to fight for pensions and our seniors because they deserve the best of all members of the House of Commons.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shocked to hear the Liberal leader say that the class system was alive and well in Canada. In a recent media scrum, he called himself "a proud member of the political class". That is unbelievable.

This is not the first time the Liberal leader has gone elitist on Canadians. During his recent spenders' conference, the Liberal leader referred to the break between his own political class and the citizens of Canada. He also referred to America as being his own country. No wonder he is calling for GST hikes, carbon taxes and job-killing business taxes.

Just who does the Liberal leader think he is? An elitist aristocrat? Does he not realize that Canada does not have a class system?

After 34 long years of being away from Canada, the Liberal leader is completely out of touch with hard-working Canadians. His claim to being a proud member of the political class proves that, yet again, the Liberal leader is just visiting.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

POLAND

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, the unimaginable happened in Poland. The plane that crashed was carrying the Polish president, Lech Kaczynski, and his wife, parliamentarians, senators, opposition leaders, senior officials, including the central bank governor, the chief of defence staff, as well as generals of the armed forces. In all, 96 people lost their lives.

Oral Questions

This accident is even more tragic, since this delegation was killed not far from Katyn, the same place where, in 1940, the Soviet army massacred 20,000 Polish soldiers. The Polish officials were travelling there to commemorate the 70th anniversary of this tragedy.

On behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I offer *moje kondolencje i sympatja* to the people of Poland, to its diaspora and to all its politicians.

* * *

[English]

POLAND

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to mourn the death of the president of Poland and the 95 other Polish leaders who died in Saturday's tragic airplane crash.

[Translation]

President Kaczynski was a defender of freedom, one of those courageous Poles who took a stand to put an end to half a century of repression and bring down an entire empire.

[English]

The shock of this weekend is compounded by the 70th anniversary of the massacre at Katyn, a place of infamy in Polish history, now darkened by this tragedy.

Today, everyone in the House stands in grief and solidarity with the people of Poland and with the Polish Canadian community. We honour the lives of the victims, including some of Poland's most distinguished citizens. We recall with gratitude the immense contribution made by Polish people to our life in Canada and we venerate Poland's unquenchable passion for freedom.

* * *

POLAND

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Canada-Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group, I would like to express our shock and sadness at the sudden and tragic passing of Polish President Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria and the members of the Polish delegation who lost their lives in Saturday's plane crash.

I had the honour and privilege of accompanying First Lady Maria Kaczynska as she toured Centre Block last year. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, how delighted she was to have her photo taken with Sir Winston Churchill's portrait in your office.

We learned from her that day that her uncle had been one of the victims of the Katyn massacre. Therefore, it is especially difficult to hear of her untimely passing while en route to Russia to commemorate the lives of the 24,000 Polish prisoners of war who were brutally killed in the Katyn forest 70 years ago.

My wife, Basia, and I join with all members of the Canada-Poland Friendship Group in expressing our sincere and deepest sympathy to the families of the victims, the people of Poland and all Polish Canadians during this very sad and difficult time.

I encourage Canadians to sign one of the books of condolence at the Polish Embassy in Ottawa or through any Polish consulate.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Prime Minister fired a minister, kicked her out of caucus, called in the RCMP and the Ethics Commissioner, and Canadians still do not know why.

There are "serious allegations" surrounding the conduct of the minister, but we still do not know what they are. When will the government tell Canadians the truth?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister reported to Canadians this past Friday, allegations came forth from a third party. Those allegations were forwarded to officials at the RCMP and with the Office of the Ethics Commissioner in Ottawa.

The RCMP and the Ethics Commissioner will come to their own conclusions, as is proper on this issue.

• (1420)

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how long will the government hide behind the Ethics Commissioner and the Mounties? This sordid tale has been going on for six weeks. It was not enough that the minister violated airport security and abused airport personnel. It was not enough that her staff impersonated the public in a letter writing campaign.

For six long weeks, the Prime Minister has got up and said that she was doing a great job and then presto, from Thursday night to Friday morning, he called in the RCMP. Why?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to the leader of the Liberal Party and leader of the official opposition that I do not share the conclusions he has just made.

When the allegations of the third party arose, our government acted both quickly and appropriately and forwarded them on to both the RCMP and to the Office of the Ethics Commissioner.

The Prime Minister has been and will continue to act appropriately in this important issue.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, who is the third party referred to in the minister's reply?

[Translation]

These are questions that have to do with the integrity of this government.

When the Mulrone-Schreiber affair cast doubt on the integrity of the Prime Minister's Office, the Prime Minister called for a public inquiry. Today, the integrity of his office is again in question.

Oral Questions

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to be transparent in this case? Canadians are entitled to the truth, are they not?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the issue to which the Leader of the Opposition refers, as I said, is a public, well-documented issue and a public inquiry was held.

Let me be very clear. The allegations that were brought forward by a third party do not involve any minister, any MP, any senator or, for that matter, any government employee.

The Prime Minister acted expeditiously and forwarded these allegations on to the appropriate officials.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are rightly outraged that well-connected Conservatives are apparently meeting with questionable businessmen and claiming they have the inside track on securing government funding. These claims are made more credible by the fact that these Conservatives appear to have had privileged access to federal cabinet.

Will the government come clean on all of the dates that its ministers have met with Rahim Jaffer or his business associates since they launched their company, Green Power Generation Corporation?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all that is insinuated by the member for Winnipeg South Centre and various reports in the media suggesting that the Prime Minister's office has opened its doors to Mr. Jaffer or his associates are absolutely without basis and are false.

Our government has worked hard, from our first piece of legislation, the Federal Accountability Act, to raise the bar on important issues surrounding the administration of public business, and we have every right to be proud of those new reforms.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us get specific. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities is responsible for administering the \$1 billion green infrastructure fund.

On September 3, 2009, the minister met with Rahim Jaffer in Ottawa. What did they discuss and were those discussions reported to the Commissioner of Lobbying, as required by law?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to confirm to the members of the House that Mr. Jaffer never made any inquiries with respect to his business.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the affair involving the former minister for the status of women, the government is using the same tactics the Liberals used during the sponsorship scandal: it is refusing to answer, because the matter is under investigation. That is a bit rich coming from a government that campaigned on transparency.

Since rumours are often worse than the facts—unless the reverse is true in this case—will the government tell us what prompted it to relieve the former minister for the status of women of her duties and turn the case over to the RCMP?

● (1425)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, we learned of allegations made by a third party. Those allegations were referred to the RCMP and the Ethics Commissioner. The RCMP and the Ethics Commissioner will draw their own conclusions.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, those are the same answers that Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Gagliano gave and that outraged the opposition leader, who is now the Prime Minister. In changing sides, he has changed his tune.

It is hard to follow the government in this case. A week ago, the Prime Minister came to the defence of the Minister for the Status of Women, saying that there was nothing wrong, that everything was fine and that she was entitled to her privacy, as in the case of the member for Beauce. We are not talking about something that happened 25 years ago.

The government must have had serious reasons for kicking the former minister out of caucus. It should tell us what those reasons are.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the allegations came to light on Friday, and we acted quickly and appropriately. These allegations do not involve any other minister, any MP, any senator or any government employee.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by involving the RCMP in the matter of the former minister for the status of women without further explanation, the Prime Minister is raising a whole host of questions of a criminal nature. It seems that the dubious dealings of the ex-minister's husband, the former chair of the Conservative caucus, and the inappropriate use of House of Commons property explains the involvement of the RCMP in this matter.

Will the government be transparent and disclose the information that led to the minister's dismissal?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we acted promptly. When we learned of the allegations we immediately referred the matter to the RCMP and the Ethics Commissioner. They will draw their own conclusions. I wish to remind hon. members that it was our government that implemented the Federal Accountability Act precisely to clean house here in Ottawa.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by refusing to answer the question, the government is allowing wild rumours to flow freely. A source contacted by the *Globe and Mail* has acknowledged that the minister's dismissal involves her husband's business dealings peripherally. Others question the legitimacy of an \$800,000 mortgage obtained by the former minister.

When will the government put an end to this circus by shedding light on the compromising information that was handed over to the police?

Oral Questions

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned of the allegations from a third party last Friday. When we found out, we acted promptly by referring the matter to the RCMP and the ethics commissioner. These two parties will draw their own conclusions; the process is underway. As a government we acted promptly.

* * *

[English]

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the nuclear summit is opening today in Washington.

The Conservative government does not seem to have learned from the mistakes of the past, the mistakes that brought India into the nuclear club in the first place, and it is out there flogging technology without having ensured that all of the proper safeguards that we need are in place.

Canadians are expecting that we would be an active part of preventing nuclear proliferation. Even former Conservative Senator Roche has been saying that Canada is off-side.

Will the government support the proposals of President Obama to put a limit on nuclear proliferation in the state we are in right now?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the leader of the New Democratic Party that the Prime Minister shares the concern on nuclear proliferation and we share the concern of a rogue state or a terrorist organization getting access to nuclear materials or nuclear weapons, which is why the Prime Minister is joining dozens of world leaders in Washington right now to discuss what we may do best to help counter this significant threat to Canadian security and indeed the security of people all over the world.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was the fourth anniversary of the Federal Accountability Act.

However, since then, we have seen links between the member for Beauce and biker gangs, and then another link between biker gangs and the former minister for the status of women. She is now under investigation by the RCMP. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is also involved in a conflict of interest.

Can the government explain exactly what difference there is now between the Conservatives and the Liberals?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was this government, upon taking office, that brought in the Federal Accountability Act, the toughest anti-corruption legislation ever passed by this Parliament. For the first time in a generation, we ended the influence of big money and politics, no more big corporate donations and no more

big union donations. We put a huge amount of power back in the hands of the Canadian people where that power is deserved.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government must provide answers now so that we can put this sordid business aside and start to deal with the important issues affecting Canadians.

The Prime Minister's guide for ministers, which I have here, states very clearly in standards of conduct:

Full accountability to Canadians is a central objective of this government.

That stands in tatters today.

The Prime Minister is ultimately responsible for his cabinet and he must be accountable and transparent. Why was this matter referred to the RCMP? Would he give us an answer today?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was for the very reasons that the member described that the Prime Minister, when he received these allegations, allegations that are unproven to him or anyone else, referred these allegations to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and to the Ethics Commissioner. Those are the independent agencies that are charged with making this type of determination. The Prime Minister acted quickly and expeditiously on this important issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to claim that Rahim Jaffer is an ordinary citizen. Despite its denials, there are so many links that the government seems to be caught in a spider web.

On April 30, 2009, Rahim Jaffer attended a reception for Christine Elliott's leadership campaign. The Minister of Finance was at that same reception.

What did the Minister of Finance talk about with Rahim Jaffer? Did he report the discussion to the commissioner of lobbying, as required by law?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if that was the second round, the best that the Liberal Party has to offer, or in the case of the member, the second best that the Liberal Party has, I really shake my head.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the then-Minister of Natural Resources was also at that reception. We know that Rahim Jaffer has claimed to have access to a green fund. Furthermore, he has bragged about his influence with Conservative ministers. Canadians want to get to the bottom of this and do not want to hear prepared statements.

What did the former natural resources minister talk about with Mr. Jaffer? Did she report the discussion to the commissioner of lobbying, as required by law?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Jaffer is in private life now. If the member opposite has any serious allegations to bring forward with respect to this case, I would expect that he should put any evidence on the floor of the House of Commons right now.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last time a Prime Minister was forced to call in the RCMP to investigate a sitting member of his own cabinet was in 1987 under Brian Mulroney. Unlike this time, then Prime Minister Mulroney made clear the nature of that investigation. He realized that when a minister of the Crown was possibly involved in criminal activity and abuses of public trust, disclosure is critical to maintaining public confidence.

If disclosing the nature of such an investigation was a moral obligation to Mr. Mulroney, why is it not for the present Prime Minister?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the allegations were brought to the Prime Minister's attention, he moved expeditiously and quickly. He immediately referred them to the two relevant independent authorities, the RCMP and the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. Those authorities will be the ones who will come to conclusions with respect to these matters.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): However, Mr. Speaker, they will not tell us what the allegations are.

From redacting documents, to shutting down Parliament, to firing critical watchdogs and attacking the independence of the public service, the government loathes accountability. If a fact does not fit its rhetoric there is not a word it will not black out, an institution it will not shut down or a truth it will not conceal.

A minister was removed and a criminal investigation has begun. These are serious allegations that demand answers.

Accountability is not an act that was passed four years ago. It is the actions that are taken right now. What is the nature of these allegations?

• (1435)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not share the opinion of the member opposite with respect to his conclusions on this issue.

Here is what we know. Some allegations were brought forward to the Prime Minister's attention. He showed some confidence in the RCMP and the Office of the Ethics Commission by immediately forwarding these allegations so that they could be independently reviewed.

* * *

*[Translation]***DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's National Assembly is unanimously opposed to the addition of 30 supplementary seats in the House of Commons because it will reduce the political weight of the Quebec nation in this parliament.

The current calculation method has many exceptions, notably the senatorial clause protecting the weight of the Maritime provinces.

If they can make some exceptions to equal representation for voters, why are they refusing to maintain the Quebec nation's political weight and not guaranteeing it 25% of the seats?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has a guaranteed minimum of 75 seats. That said, the basic principle of democracy has to be respected; that is, the number of seats is based on population. It is as simple as that.

But once again, the Bloc, to create division, is setting aside its principle of fairness. The real political setback is keeping Quebec isolated in opposition for the past 20 years and more.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a recent survey shows that 71% of Quebecers feel duped by this addition of seats because the change offers nothing to ensure that Quebec's political weight will not be diminished.

How can a government that says it is listening to the concerns of the Quebec nation then move forward with a bill that aims to reduce the political weight of the Quebec nation in the federal parliament?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague undoubtedly knows Jean-Pierre Charbonneau, the former speaker of the National Assembly, who fought for fair democratic reform. I would like to paraphrase his words.

Mr. Charbonneau said that, as a democrat, he could not oppose the fact that English Canada wants representation based on relative population sizes. His fight for democratic reform in Quebec was based on this principle, and if that principle was logical for Quebec, it is for English Canada as well.

What does the Bloc think? That comes from head office.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has announced that, no matter what the unemployment rate is, the transitional measures that apply to the regions in eastern Quebec will be gradually eliminated and will disappear altogether in April 2012, no matter what.

How can the government recognize that the current situation is problematic and that transitional measures need to be renewed, and on the other hand, announce the end of these measures, no matter what the state of the labour market in April 2012?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, a few days ago the Bloc members absolutely insisted that we renew the transitional measures. I replied to the Bloc Québécois that some government ministers are also from Quebec and we were analyzing this matter very carefully.

I am pleased to inform the House that we confirmed Friday that the transitional employment insurance measures, which will be good for the regions, will be available in Madawaska—Charlotte, as well as the Lower St. Lawrence and North Shore regions of Quebec.

*Oral Questions***FISHERIES**

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has announced a 63% cut in snow crab quotas for area 12 for 2010. This decision jeopardizes hundreds of jobs in the Gaspé and Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and it creates serious uncertainty for many families who depend on this industry.

Will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans undertake to develop an emergency assistance plan to alleviate the stress these families are suffering?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we certainly sympathize with those who were impacted by the reduction in the snow crab quota. I can assure the House that this decision was not arrived at easily. We took into consideration scientific advice and the information we received from the harvesters.

Ultimately, conservation must remain our top priority and we will work with the stakeholders on policy flexibility to help reduce the cost to them.

* * *

• (1440)

LOBBYING

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former chair of the Conservative caucus, Rahim Jaffer, has been busy. This time it is lobbying. He advertised his connections and his ability to influence his former colleagues. But there is a thing called the Lobbying Act. It is a law. He broke that law. And he did so, all the while bragging about and peddling the influence he had with his Conservative friends and colleagues.

Why do our laws apply to everyone except Conservatives?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, we are all equal under the law. If the member opposite has any evidence that someone has broken the law, she should raise it with the relevant authorities.

Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when one is advertising his lobbying efforts, it is suggested he should register under the Lobbying Act.

He was in fact the chair of the Conservative caucus. Contrary to other suggestions about non-influence, he was hand-picked for that position by none other than the Prime Minister himself. So much for no influence. And he used this influence to benefit his company, Green Power Generation Corporation, which in turn claimed the ability to influence government investment of over \$3 billion.

How much does the Conservative government stand behind its own laws when its own are allowed to break them?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Liberals do not want to allow any independent authority to look at anything because they can make the allegations and then determine guilt or innocence.

If the member opposite has any concerns that anyone has broken the law, I would encourage her to raise them with the relevant authorities.

* * *

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in January, the son-in-law of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans landed a lucrative government grant, up to \$20 million. But the minister failed to publicly disclose the relationship to Canadian taxpayers.

The Conflict of Interest Act requires ministers to formally recuse themselves of any decision that would benefit their family. The minister did not.

Why did the minister knowingly violate the act?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, upon being elected in 2008, I did disclose to the ethics commissioner my relationship with the CEO of the Wind Energy Institute of Canada, which is the organization that received the funding.

I have followed the advice of the commissioner. The allegations in the media are baseless and they are unfounded.

[Translation]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has the floor.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, the minister claims that she was not involved in her son-in-law's wind power generation project, but on January 15, the CBC reported that the minister was pressuring her cabinet colleagues, especially the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, to allocate funding for wind power generation projects in her province.

When will the minister comply with the Conflict of Interest Act and recuse herself from this file?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get his facts straight and go and watch that story again. That was the story about a cable to bring energy to Prince Edward Island, and it is something that the Prince Edward Island government was requesting.

* * *

HAITI

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were among the most generous in the world when it came to donating to Haiti. Social groups, school children, churches and individual Canadians from coast to coast to coast all worked to raise money for Haiti.

The minister announced the government would match the donations of Canadians, and our government has committed \$220 million to do just that.

I know the minister was in Haiti last week to witness the devastation and to meet with Haitian leaders on the next steps to recovery.

Oral Questions

Would the minister update this House on what is being done?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the generosity of Canadians has been unparalleled. As he said, I witnessed first-hand the difference we are making in Haiti after the earthquake. I saw work being done by organizations with the original support from the government plus \$220 million received directly by these organizations.

Last week, I announced \$65 million for that support, the first tranche of the matching funds to go forward to support Haiti.

* * *

• (1445)

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday *The Globe and Mail* reported that the government was aware of the activities of the former governor of Kandahar, Asadullah Khalid, and his gang of torturers called brigade 888, regarded as trusted allies. Brigade 888 reportedly received \$12,000 a month from Canada's Joint Provincial Co-ordination Centre and it is alleged that Canadian Forces were even asked to hand out the money.

These allegations come as close to complicity as it gets. Can the Minister of National Defence tell us who made the decision that Canada would act as paymasters for torturers in Afghanistan?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member likes to believe every single solitary word he reads in *The Globe and Mail*, but let me quote from that same article. It says:

However, Canadian soldiers who served at the JPCC said they were unaware of any payments...

It goes on to quote a Canadian officer who says, "We never paid those guys". Why would he not take the word of a Canadian soldier on this matter instead of a journalist?

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course, another officer said that they were handing out guns and money. Warnings about Mr. Khalid have been around for some time.

Richard Colvin testified that Mr. Khalid had a criminal gang and a dungeon where he tortured people. When the President of Afghanistan raised concerns about the governor, Canada defended him. The government knew he was trouble. Even the Minister of Foreign Affairs wanted him gone, yet we had military leaders supporting him.

What was going on? Can the Minister of National Defence explain why this should not be the subject of a public inquiry?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, there are so many inaccuracies in that question that I do not know where to begin. What I can tell him is that I just returned from Afghanistan. There I saw the incredible work of dedicated men and women in uniform as well as officials from CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs doing incredible things to help the people of Afghanistan.

Are we handing out money? No, we are paying Afghans to do important work to improve the infrastructure of their own country. I saw it first-hand. Why does the hon. member not dig a little deeper

into these facts before he comes into this chamber and starts disparaging the good work of the Canadian Forces?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to two soldiers who testified before the Military Police Complaints Commission, military police in Afghanistan are not given specific training on the provisions of the Geneva convention applicable to the treatment of prisoners.

How can the government claim that it respects the Geneva convention when it is not even able to ensure that military police have adequate knowledge of the convention's obligations?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is another allegation that is completely false. I have here a quote from Brigadier General Denis Thompson.

[*English*]

This is what Mr. Thompson had to say about this subject matter:

...what we train on is the third Geneva convention. We make sure we handle all detainees in accordance with the regulations that are laid out there...

This is from a senior member of the Canadian Forces, a commander leading the Canadian Forces in Afghanistan during the period in question. Why will the hon. member not take the word of the hard-working, dedicated, professional leadership of the Canadian Forces instead of a journalist?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about what journalists are saying, we are referring to the testimony of soldiers before the commission. The minister must understand this. He told my colleague that we must believe them. We listened and are reporting their concerns in this place.

In addition to inadequate training, the military police do not even have sufficient resources to investigate the allegations of torture of Afghan detainees. Consequently, when investigations are initiated, they take months and it becomes increasingly difficult to substantiate the allegations of torture.

Does the lack of resources and training not prove that, once again, at the political level, every effort is made, as the minister just did—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of National Defence.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard continually from the leadership of the Canadian Forces and the soldiers on the ground doing their work, each and every time there has been a credible allegation of wrongdoing. These are allegations, by the way, of things that take place inside Afghan prisons, of Afghans on Taliban prisoners who have been transferred after being picked up for being involved in trying to blow up Canadian soldiers or affect the citizenship of their own country.

Oral Questions

When we transfer them over to the authorities in Afghanistan and allegations arise, we investigate. We have a new transfer arrangement in place, much improved upon the previous government's—

• (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of National Defence on the future of the Afghanistan mission.

There is some confusion. He spoke of training Afghan police and the possibility of the presence of troops to train other troops. I have a simple and direct question for him.

Can the minister guarantee that the future of the Afghanistan mission will be the subject of a real debate in Parliament and that he will finally present the Canadian government's policy on—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can only say again that the government has been very clear. Canada's military mission will end in 2011. Officials are now considering and examining Canada's potential and non-military role post-2011.

I would remind the member opposite that we encourage the members of the special committee on Afghanistan to study Canada's potential role in Afghanistan post-2011. Every time the government suggests in committee that they do that, the opposition votes against it.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister.

I wonder if the minister could explain how it is that the leaders of Kazakhstan, Armenia, Nigeria, India, and the list goes on, 12 leaders, are able to get a bilateral meeting with President Obama over the next two days in Washington while the President is there.

I wonder if the minister could explain why the Prime Minister of Canada is not able to discuss the future of our mission in Afghanistan with the President of the United States in a bilateral meeting.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague on the other side of the House that the Prime Minister has spoken any number of times with the President and with the Secretary of State and made it very clear that this Parliament decided that Canada's military mission in Afghanistan will end in March 2011.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FISHERIES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced that crab quotas in area 12, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, have been cut by 63% this year. The crab fishing industry was not expecting such a dramatic reduction. These quotas mean that plant workers and

deckhands will have just three weeks or so of work, and some will lose their jobs.

The Government of New Brunswick has already asked the federal government to help these workers. What does the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development plan to do to support them through this crisis?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are aware of this very sad and disappointing situation. We are working with the provinces to help the people affected by this measure.

[*English*]

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year Fraser River sockeye, which passed through a gauntlet of salmon farms in Georgia Strait, suffered a massive loss. However, that same year the Harrison salmon run, which did not pass by those fish farms, reported good returns. Coincidence? Possibly.

However, at a time when countries are reporting major problems with sea lice outbreaks, fish farms and declining fish stocks, the government says there is no problem here.

When will the minister admit there is a problem with sea lice? When will she take action?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government certainly understands the cultural, economic and recreational importance of sockeye salmon to British Columbians.

It was this government and the Prime Minister that established the Cohen inquiry on Fraser River sockeye that will provide an independent look at the management of sockeye salmon. It will also look at things such as the effect of aquaculture on sockeye salmon.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan is working. It is helping protect and create jobs across this country. It is fuelling growth through tax relief and infrastructure spending.

While Liberals are talking about tax hikes, we are hard at work creating the economy of tomorrow with year two of Canada's economic action plan.

Could the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities please update this House about the latest news on the job front?

• (1455)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side of the House are focused on jobs and the economy and we are seeing that our economic action plan is working.

Just last month, Statistics Canada announced that the Canadian economy created 18,000 new jobs. Since July 2009, we have seen job increases in six of the last eight months and we have seen some 180,000 new jobs created in this country.

We are going to stick to the plan. We are going to stay focused on the real priorities of Canadians, on jobs and the economy.

* * *

TRADE

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the trans-Pacific partnership is the biggest multilateral free trade deal in the region right now. It includes some of Canada's biggest allies, including the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. Canada is a Pacific nation but we are not even at the table. Why not?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada sees Asia as a very important part of our emerging trade patterns. Of course we encourage what we see happening with the trans-Pacific partnership. Any move toward freer trade is a positive development as far as we are concerned.

We continue to have discussions with the members of the trans-Pacific partnership to determine what kind of role would be appropriate for us and if it does make sense for Canada to participate. We will continue those ongoing bilateral discussions.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at least five groups in Quebec have expressed serious concerns about Bill C-4 regarding young offenders. Quebec's Commission des droits de la personne, the Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes, the Comité en droit de la jeunesse of the Barreau du Québec, the Regroupement des organismes de justice alternative, and the Association des centres jeunesse have not taken well to the government's plan and have identified some serious flaws.

Will the government respect the consensus in Quebec and amend its bill to reflect the Quebec model of rehabilitation, which has been so successful for us year after year?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our approach in this area is balanced. It includes prevention, enforcement and rehabilitation, especially in law. It gives Canadians greater confidence that violent and repeat young offenders will be held accountable.

This has already received praise from the Quebec provincial police association and victims' families in Quebec. I think the hon. member should listen to them as well.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Wednesday Canada's only federal climate change legislation, Bill C-311, will face a crucial vote here in this House. All

Oral Questions

the opposition members have supported this bill. Canadians want to know where we are going on climate change.

Since the government has no credible plan of its own, will the government join us in supporting this non-partisan bill on Wednesday so that it can have the vigorous debate it deserves?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-311 is an NDP climate change bill that would devastate the economic recovery. It would force Canada to diverge from the aggressive targets that our government and President Obama have identified.

The NDP does not get it. An effective climate change plan must be done in partnership with our international trading partners and it must be done with economic realities.

* * *

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to strengthening Canada's economy through all sectors, especially our cultural sector.

Recently, our government ordered a review of Amazon.ca's request to create a new book distribution centre in Canada. Could the minister update the House on this review?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Amazon.ca has been granted approval to establish a distribution centre for its Canadian operations.

For Canadians, this means jobs. It also means an investment of over \$20 million into the Canadian economy, better visibility for Canadian books on the Amazon.ca website, a dedicated Amazon staff person to help Canadian publishers, more Canadian content available on the Kindle, and a summer internship program for Canadian students.

What this means for Canadian authors is that they will have more opportunity to sell their excellence to an international audience. This is good for Canada.

* * *

TRADE

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the Conservatives said "No" to the trans-Pacific trade talks. Two years later the government flip-flopped and decided it wanted in, but this time the U.S. said "No" to Canada.

Why is the government frittering away our biggest trade opportunities? What is the government doing right now to fight the U.S. veto against Canada's participation in these vital trans-Pacific trade talks?

Routine Proceedings

●(1500)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the characterization the hon. member opposite has given to the situation.

We will continue to work constructively to determine if it makes sense for Canada to have a role, how we can best contribute to the advancement of the trans-Pacific partnership.

As for the relationship with the United States, we are very proud of our trading relationships. NAFTA has been good for Canada. What is more, with our delivery of a deal, a waiver from buy America, we have reinforced once again that Canada has a special trading relationship with the United States that no other country in the world has. That is something we are very proud of.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in reading the budget speech in the National Assembly, Quebec's finance minister listed the issues that had top priority. On sales tax harmonization, he said: "Québec...hoped for a quick decision from the federal government". On the unfair treatment of Hydro-Québec and Hydro One revenue, Quebec's finance minister said: "Quebec wants an immediate resolution to the specific question".

Could the finance minister look across the Ottawa River once in a while and deal with the issues he has left hanging?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these issues are obviously tremendously important not just to the government of Quebec but indeed to the Minister of Finance as well. I think he has spoken very clearly to this issue with respect to working with his counterpart in the province of Quebec in order to make compensation for harmonizing the tax. It actually has to be harmonized, though.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week doctors reported that people in Grassy Narrows who were exposed to levels of mercury deemed safe by Health Canada still show signs of poisoning. Pulp mills that used the mercury cell process operated in Thunder Bay, Hamilton and Saskatoon. Potentially over a million Canadians might have been exposed to levels of mercury that Health Canada considers safe.

Will the health minister demand that Health Canada change its guidelines? Will the minister initiate a study of the health of those who have been exposed to this mercury pollution?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the department responds to requests of that nature on a regular basis. This is one of those projects that we had reviewed and determined was safe, but I will follow up further with departmental officials to see what we can do to address the concerns.

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during question period when the member for Toronto Centre was asking his question, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women had her BlackBerry and took a picture in the House of Commons which I believe is against the rules of the House.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact that did happen. It was an accident. I can assure the member that the picture showed them hard at work, but it has been deleted.

The Speaker: Accidents will happen.

The hon. minister of state is rising.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In my answer to the member for Toronto Centre, I added an unnecessary modifier. My answer should have said that Canada's military mission in Afghanistan will end in 2011, period.

* * *

DEATH OF POLAND'S PRESIDENT AND OTHER OFFICIALS

The Speaker: I believe there is unanimous of the House to have a moment of silence at this time in honour of the losses sustained in Poland in the death of its president and other officials.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

●(1505)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 66(2), I would like to designate tomorrow to conclude the debate on the motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to table, in both official languages, Health Canada's proposal to Parliament for user fees and service standards for human drugs and medical devices program. I look forward to hearing the views of parliamentarians on this very important proposal.

*Routine Proceedings***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 18 petitions.

* * *

FAIRNESS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES (EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE) ACT

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not often a petition results in a news story, but I think this may very well. Members of the Daylu-Dena council in the Watson Lake area in southern Yukon and northern B.C. are shocked that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has left them in the unbelievable position of having their programs conducted out of a former residential school. This is even more incredible based on the fact that the Prime Minister just made a major apology about these residential schools.

They say the building is essentially unfit for human habitation and a source of horrible haunting and painful memories of abuse for those who have to go to their first nation to get services and for those who work in the building. The petitioners call on Parliament to call on the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to assist in the demolition of this residential school and replace it with new offices and community facilities for the Daylu-Dena council and the community of Lower Post.

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians are calling on Parliament to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights. Bill C-310 would compensate air passengers on all Canadian carriers including charters anywhere they fly in the world.

The bill would provide compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and long tarmac delays. It would address issues such as late and misplaced baggage, would require all inclusive pricing by airlines in their advertising.

The airlines would have to inform passengers of flight changes, either delays or cancellations, and new rules would have to be posted at the airports. Airlines would have to inform passengers of their rights and the process to follow for compensation.

This type of legislation has been in Europe now for actually a lot longer than five years but certainly five years in its current form. The question is, why should Air Canada passengers receive better treatment on flights in Europe than in Canada itself? In fact, if the airlines follow the rules, it will cost the airlines nothing.

The petitioners call on the government to support Bill C-310, which would introduce Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights.

● (1510)

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, which is signed by Canadians, is calling on the government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada for the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

As the Speaker knows, the earthquake in Chile occurred on February 27, 2010. It was an 8.8 magnitude earthquake, which was huge. It occurred in southern Chile and the Chilean Canadian community has been holding fundraising events across the country and more particularly in Winnipeg where it has raised \$10,000 in the last event.

As well, the people are getting very concerned that time is going by. They want the same treatment given to the earthquake victims in Chile as the Prime Minister did for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a somewhat special anniversary. The earthquake in Haiti took place three months ago today.

I am presenting this petition on behalf of citizens on both sides of the river. They are asking the government to show more flexibility in its definition of the people who can be included in the family class. More specifically, Canadian citizens are asking the government to establish a special immigration measure enabling Canadian citizens or permanent residents to sponsor members of their families who have been personally and directly affected by the Haiti earthquake of January 12, no matter their age.

This is a very important point for this community and I hope the government is listening.

[English]

FOREIGN TAKEOVERS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to bring the concerns of hundreds of citizens in northern Ontario who believe that we need some accountability in the House of Commons toward the actions of companies like Xstrata and Vale.

Three years ago the Conservative government rubber stamped the sale of Falconbridge and Inco, and we received no commitments in return. Xstrata immediately began showing its true colours. It fired hundreds of workers in Sudbury. It shut down operations. It moved to begin the hydrating of the deposits at Nickel Rim. Now, it is shutting down the copper refining capacity of Ontario. At the Kidd Metallurgical Site, we have tried to meet with the officials. They are not interested. The ore is being moved out

Routine Proceedings

We are concerned that this will be a long-term move to ship copper resources to places like China and other jurisdictions.

The petitioners are calling on the government to change section 36 of the Investment Canada Act, so that we can see the secret agreement that was signed by Xstrata and the agreement that was signed by Vale, so we can have some accountability as citizens. We are nine months into this brutal strike with Vale. It is trying to turn our workers in Sudbury into third world workers. We are seeing what is happening with Xstrata in Timmins and what is happening in Sudbury.

We want to have some commitments that the government will be working with the people of the north and with our mining industry to make sure that this debacle will never be enacted in another industry in Canada again.

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition today signed by many people from Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia and Saskatchewan who are calling on Parliament to reject the Canada-Colombia free trade agreement.

These petitioners are particularly concerned about the level of violence in Colombian society, particularly that directed toward members of civil society and workers in Colombia by the paramilitaries who are closely associated with the current Uribe regime, and which has seen over 2,200 trade unionists murdered since 1991.

These petitioners are calling on Parliament to reject the Canada-Colombia deal until a full human rights impact assessment has been carried out and these concerns have been addressed.

They are also calling for a deal based on the principles of fair trade and not necessarily free trade, which would take environmental and social impacts fully into account while respecting labour rights and the rights of all affected people.

FOREIGN TAKEOVERS

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too have petitions from dozens and dozens of citizens from Nickel Belt who are concerned about what is happening in my community. They are presently being held hostage by a company called Vale Inco, a company that was allowed by the government to purchase our natural resources, resources that belong to Canadians. This company has tried to bring a third world mentality to Canada.

The petitioners request that the Minister of Industry and the House of Commons amend section 36 of the Investment Canada Act in order to make details of undertakings made by foreign companies during trial acquisitions public.

They further request that the Minister of Industry make the undertakings made during the acquisition of Inco and Falconbridge public. They support Bill C-488, Bill C-489 and Bill C-490.

●(1515)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following question will be answered today: No. 35.

[Text]

Question No. 35—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

With regard to First Nations and bluefin tuna fishery: (a) how will the Department of Fisheries and Oceans accommodate the First Nations with regard to fair and reasonable access to bluefin tuna; (b) will the Department develop a plan to correct the current situation; and (c) is the Department planning any adjustments to the 2010 fishing season to accommodate First Nations?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, the answer is as follows: a) The Government of Canada has increased first nations access to the bluefin tuna fishery through the Marshall response initiative by acquiring approximately 55 commercial licences and providing them to first nations groups. The bluefin tuna licence is just one part of a package of licences that also includes other species such as lobster, crab, or scallops, aimed at providing first nations with a means to achieve a moderate livelihood from the fishery.

b) First nations licence holders in the bluefin tuna fishery receive fair and reasonable access. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has worked with the various inshore fleets to ensure that first nations licence holders are integrated into the fleet, can provide input into the fleets fishing plan, and have the same access to the fishery as all other commercial licence holders in the fleet.

c) While the Gulf New Brunswick inshore bluefin tuna fleet did receive an increase in its allocation a couple of years ago to assist with the integration of first nations license holders, there are no further changes expected for the 2010 fishing season.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the answer to Question No. 36 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Privilege

[Text]

Question No. 36—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

With regard to the short-term transitional measures for lobster fishers announced on June 10, 2009, by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans: (a) how many applications has the department received to date; (b) how many applications have been approved; (c) how many applications have been denied; (d) how many applications from the riding of Beauséjour have been approved; (e) how many applications from the riding of Beauséjour have been denied; (f) of the applications that have been denied, (i) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not hold a valid lobster licence in both 2008 and 2009, (ii) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not earn income from lobster fishing in both 2008 and 2009, (iii) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not have a gross value of lobster landings less than or equal to \$50,000 in 2009, (iv) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not experience at least a 25% decline in landed lobster value between 2008 and 2009, (v) how many have been denied solely because the applicant was not lobster dependent; (g) of the applications that have been denied solely because the applicant did not have a gross value of lobster landings less than or equal to \$50,000 in 2009, (i) how many had a gross value of lobster landings less than or equal to \$55,000; (h) of the applications that have been denied solely because the applicant did not experience at least a 25% decline in landed lobster value between 2008 and 2009, (i) how many had experienced a decline between 19% and 25% exclusive; (i) of the applications from the riding of Beauséjour that have been denied, (i) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not hold a valid lobster licence in both 2008 and 2009, (ii) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not earn income from lobster fishing in both 2008 and 2009, (iii) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not have a gross value of lobster landings less than or equal to \$50,000 in 2009, (iv) how many have been denied solely because the applicant did not experience at least a 25% decline in landed lobster value between 2008 and 2009, (v) how many have been denied solely because the applicant was not lobster dependent; (j) of the applications from the riding of Beauséjour that have been denied solely because the applicant did not have a gross value of lobster landings less than or equal to \$50,000 in 2009, (i) how many had a gross value of lobster landings less than or equal to \$55,000; and (k) of the applications from the riding of Beauséjour that have been denied solely because the applicant did not experience at least a 25% decline, (i) how many had experienced a decline between 19% and 25% exclusive?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Before we proceed with orders of the day, I believe the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River is rising to speak to a question of privilege that was discussed earlier in the chamber.

* * *

PRIVILEGEPROVISION OF INFORMATION TO SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE
CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is perhaps by way of rebuttal or reply to the remarks of the Attorney General two parliamentary days ago, just before the break. He took about an hour and a half in his remarks and I am going to be much shorter in my rebuttal, of course, and I hope colleagues will appreciate that. The issues, however, are important and potentially complex.

At the outset, some of the assertions of the Minister of Justice do require some rebuttal, not because it is necessary to banter on about irrelevant things, but because these are words of the Minister of

Justice. If some of these pronouncements were to be wrong in representing, as they do, the executive of government, they cannot be left unchallenged in the House.

First, he urged that the principles of necessity and restraint must underscore all matters of privilege, but in saying this he clearly failed to distinguish between the exercise of all powers and privileges of the House, and the raising of a question of privilege in the House. I am certain the Speaker will agree that while those principles reflect aspects of our constitutional functions here, it is not necessary for a member of the House to demonstrate them when raising a defined privilege matter here. I submit that these are diversionary and unhelpful remarks in dealing with these issues.

Second, he said repeatedly in his remarks that this was really just a matter of free speech and debate. He questioned how the expression of contrary opinion about parliamentary powers could lie in contempt of the House. Let us not be misled by this first-year law school sawhorse about free speech. Just because one has free speech, it does not give someone the right to slander another, nor does it give one the right to shout “fire” in a crowded movie theatre.

The issue I raise is not about free speech or opinion. It is about government ministers and the assistant deputy minister of the Department of Justice publicly stating that our parliamentary witnesses, whether ordinary citizens or government officials, do not have full immunity and protection through privilege when they provide evidence and documents to our committees, irrespective of what any statute or convention otherwise provides and, thereby, intimidate witnesses into false observances and obstruct us in our parliamentary inquiry functions. This is the real issue here and I will repeat it later in my remarks.

Third, in a theme that recurred throughout his remarks, the Minister of Justice said that this was just debate about an unclear subject. He said that in administering and enforcing our privileges, we here assembled were not a court of law and that the Speaker will not decide a question of law. On these issues, he could not be more confused.

It is only among the uninformed and the negligently ignorant that the power to send for persons, papers and records would appear unclear. On a matter of the law and the exercise of our privileges and powers, including the power to send for persons, papers and records, this is the only court in the country empowered to adjudicate and act. Those powers and authorities are all part of Canada's Constitution. How desperately embarrassing it is that the Attorney General of Canada could stand in this place and say these things. I want to quote his exact words:

Under the Department of Justice Act, the Attorney General of Canada is the official legal adviser of the Governor General and a legal member of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada. Officers in my department act in principle under my instruction.

There we have it. Not only does the assistant deputy minister of the Department of Justice act under the minister's instruction, her letter was not a fluke or unauthorized. The minister actually takes ownership of it. Now he says he is the official legal adviser to the Governor General. I hope the Governor General will take some advice from the House and always get a second opinion.

Privilege

● (1520)

He says that I, in this matter, merely expressed an opinion on the scope of the powers of the House to send for persons and papers. That is untrue. I did no such thing. I had no need to describe the scope of the power. It was already written. He may question the power and its scope; I do not. I simply put that power and privilege to you, Mr. Speaker, and the House and say that it is being undermined and slandered in a way that obstructs our witnesses and our committees in our inquiries.

If we do not react and grab hold of this attack now, it will have the impact of hobbling the House in all its future work in one of its essential constitutional functions, that of inquiry and holding government to account.

Fourth, another major deficiency in the submissions of the minister when he cites examples of proceedings in this and other houses and from other observers and writers on the subject of providing disclosure is the failure to distinguish between several types of disclosure procedures, for example: there is a simple request by a member for information; there is a motion for production of papers; an order for papers consented to by a minister under a motion, and we had exactly one of those orders passed here not five minutes ago; a request by a member under the Access to Information Act; a question on the order paper; a question during oral question period; a request from a committee; an order or summons from a committee; and an order of the House.

All of those are mechanisms used by this place and our committees to obtain information, and only two of them, arguably three, the order passed on consent in the House, involve orders of committees of the House. That is the highest and most effective tool, but the others are used on a daily basis around here.

This failure to distinguish is either an attempt to muddle a muddle by throwing Jello at the wall to see if it sticks, or a lack of appreciation of the difference between all these procedures on the part of the Department of Justice. Either way, it is too bad the minister could not have been more precise. I know you, Mr. Speaker, and the Table will assess this as needed and will not be fooled.

Fifth, although the debates, writings and reports in other jurisdictions can be helpful in understanding these issues, I know from our own parliamentary history and records, to the best of my ability, including the research and publication of a book on this subject in 1999, our Parliament's authority to send for persons, papers and records has never been abridged or diminished. I challenge the minister to show where our House has done so. I ask him just exactly where and when and how the House diminished or subtracted or diluted this constitutional power and function. I ask him to please show us. I submit he has not done this at all in his speech.

The minister suggests that because the House and its committees and our members often or usually accept assertions of confidentiality as we do our work, that somehow our PPR power, our power to send for persons, papers and records, has eroded or diminished. In fact, our parliamentary law prevents just that from happening. Citations should not be necessary here, but they can be provided to the Table if required. By analogy, just because nobody has been charged with

high treason under section 47 of the Criminal Code in a century, does not mean that this law has eroded or diminished in any way.

Just for the record, here are 10 commonly used categories of confidentiality claimed, used or recognized by our members in governments in Canada in which we manage in the public interest all the time: privacy; solicitor-client privilege; income tax confidentiality; cabinet confidences; Canada Evidence Act restrictions; Security of Information Act restrictions; privacy of the confessional; commercial confidentiality; crown privilege; and national security. That is just 10. There are probably others. If any of these were to obstruct our constitutional powers of inquiry, then all of them would. And if they all did, we in this place would soon, in my view, be out of business in fulfilling our constitutional role as grand inquest of the nation.

● (1525)

There are two or three specific statements from the minister which I believe to be in error and which are material and deserving of correction or clarification.

First, he says in his remarks that in no way was the work of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan impeded by the statements or by that letter. I submit that his position has been proven false by the evidence of a witness some days ago at that very committee.

On Wednesday, March 31, the witness, Mr. Cory Anderson, gave his testimony. It is shown in the *Hansard* of the Committee Evidence No. 04. I will read it. He is asked a question by one of our members, the member for Toronto Centre. I will start with his first statement, "I understand the pressures you're under, and nobody's trying to put you on the spot. I assume you have discussed your presence here and your testimony with your colleagues at the foreign affairs department...And with your superiors?...As well as with officials from the Ministry of Justice?" He answered, "I have".

The next question was, "And what have they told you?" He answered, "They have told me that my responsibilities as a public servant are not to be admonished". He uses the word "admonished". The transcript may have it wrong. It may have been "diminished". It is not clear to me. He goes on to say, "during the committee hearings. So the ability to speak frankly in a setting like this is made more difficult by interpretations by the Ministry of Justice on what actually pertains to be national security and operational imperatives".

The next question was, "So you've been told there are certain things you can't tell us." He answered, "I haven't been told there are certain specific things I can't tell you. What I've been told is that I as a public servant am still under the terms of any public servant, and those are defined by the Ministry of Justice, in my view, quite rigidly".

I will not read on, but those words clearly indicate the chill factor and impact of that letter and the Ministry of Justice's position on that particular witness. No one has questioned that he is telling the truth.

This looks like obstruction. This smells like obstruction. The witness describes the chill effect of the advice he has received from the justice department. The justice department has even but its position in writing to us. This was in the letter to the law clerk, dated December 9. Talk about a smoking gun.

Second, the minister has misconstrued the work of two committees of the House for his own ends. As fate would have it, I actually sat as a member on both of those committees 19 years ago. I think I am the only member in the House who did and is still here. I cannot allow him to misconstrue the work of those committees in his words here. He has used selective quotes out of context.

The special committee on review of the CSIS act never did find that Parliament had no role in scrutinizing national security matters and in fact recommended the creation of a parliamentary committee especially for that purpose. That very committee did receive classified information as part of its work, and all of that information has been kept in confidence by the members.

In 1991 the House of Commons justice committee brought the matter discussed by the minister before the House. It involved the refusal of the Solicitor General to turn over uncensored documents to that committee. The matter was brought into the House and when the procedure and House affairs committee, to which the matter had been referred on unanimous consent, reported back to the House, fully supporting the powers of our committees, an order of the House was passed, also unanimously, ordering the full production of the documents in camera and taking note of the full committee report as well.

• (1530)

The reference to section 8(2)(c) of the Privacy Act could not have been the basis of the order as the minister says, because in order for that section to come into play, Parliament, we in the House, would have had to have the full power of subpoena as set out in the section in the first place.

The minister says that the House order was grounded in the authority of the Privacy Act. The Privacy Act gives no such powers to the House, as the minister suggests. The House and our committees already have them, and I am being kind when I say that this remark has the potential to mislead the House.

He says that the December 9 letter expressly acknowledges that “all witnesses who testify before parliamentary committees are immune from legal and disciplinary proceedings in respect of their testimony”. That is what he says the letter says. This is simply not true. In fact, the letter states the opposite when it says, a line or two later:

However, that does not mean automatically that government officials...are absolved from respecting duties imposed by a statute enacted by Parliament, or by requirements of the common law, such as solicitor-client privilege or Crown privilege.

This completely rebuts what the minister has suggested to the House. His assertion about the content of the letter, more than once in his remarks, is patently untrue and is an apparent attempt to whitewash the contents of that letter.

Both this House and our courts, as two branches of our constitutional democracy, have powers to bring persons and

Privilege

information before them to enable them in their constitutional functions. Does the minister think that if he or his department had directly called into question the power of those courts to compel persons to attend, there would not be a constitutional crisis undermining our governance and those courts? Does he think that those courts would not react to sanction him and his officials with contempt if he were to do that? Why does he think that he and his department can get away with the same thing in this place? As chief law officer of the Crown, he must know the answers, or he should go and get them quickly.

The fact that we cannot rely on the Attorney General of Canada to provide a clear and objective statement on our parliamentary law is troubling and clearly an issue for another day. We almost ask this. Which master does our attorney general serve when he speaks to the House?

The proceedings in Jamaica in 1808, just about 200 years ago, are very instructive, because an identical issue was before that House and because there were many surprising, factual similarities, including a challenge to the king. I am going to read them. I am hoping, Mr. Speaker, that you will find them of interest, and the public record will benefit. They state:

The House of Assembly, on November 1, 1808, struck a committee to inquire into a mutiny that had occurred earlier that year. On November 2, the House sent a Message to the Governor, requesting copies of all proceedings taken before the Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry respecting the mutiny, and the Governor, in turn, communicated the request to the Commander of the Islands' Forces, Major-General Carmichael. The Governor sent the House a copy of the Commander's response, in which the Commander indicated he did not feel authorized or justified in delivering such documents to the House, which letter was tabled on November 17. On November 22, the House sent a Message to the Governor requesting him to cause the attendance of two officers of the Islands' Forces before a committee of the House. The committee reported to the House, on November 29, that their inquiry had been frustrated due to the general order issued by Major-General Carmichael on November 25, which read:

The Major-General feels a paramount duty to apprise any officer, or other person in a military capacity, that may be called to appear, that he does not permit them to answer any questions to that Legislative Body of this Island...upon the subject of a late mutiny, or upon the Government and discipline of His Majesty's forces.

• (1535)

The House thereupon unanimously passed six resolutions:

Resolved, 1st. That this House as the representatives of the people, hath of right and ever has exercised within the Island, all the powers, privileges and immunities claimed and enjoyed by the Commons House of Parliament, within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Resolved, 2nd. That it is the undoubted privilege of the House to send for all papers and records, and to order the attendance of all persons, civil and military, resident within the Island, capable of giving evidence on any subject, under investigation in the House; that to prevent the attendance of witnesses, duly summoned, or pretend to prohibit such witnesses from giving full and true answers to all questions whatever, that may be propounded for discovering the truth, are breaches of the privileges of the House.

Resolved, 3rd. That requiring the attendance of the officers, non-commissioned officers and privates of His Majesty's forces on the House, to be ordered by the Governor or Lieutenant Governor, who heretofore was commander of such forces, in place of bringing them by summons, has been matter of courtesy, in case they might, at the same time, have been ordered on other duty, and is not of right: and that the courtesy of the House has been uniformly returned by an immediate order for the attendance of all such persons, without any attempt to suppress the truth, or garble their testimony.

Resolved, 4th. That as the Grand Inquest of the country, it is the right and duty of the House to inquire into all grievances or matters which happen within the Island, dangerous to the public safety... to the end that such representations may be made to our most gracious Sovereign, or such Legislative measures adopted as shall procure redress, etc.

Privilege

I skipped number five.

Resolved, 6th. That the assumption by Major-General Carmichael of a power to obstruct this House in the exercise of its rightful functions, inquiring into the causes of a mutiny which has excited the greatest alarm... by pretending to permit or prevent the attendance of witnesses, or prohibit them from answering any questions that by this House, or its Committees, may be thought necessary... is an unconstitutional attempt to deprive this House of its undoubted rights, by an arbitrary exertion of military authority, and a gross violation of the most important privileges of the House.

Following the passage of those resolutions on November 29, the House then ordered Major-General Carmichael to attend at the Bar on December 1.

The next day, November 30, Major-General Carmichael wrote to the Governor, [and essentially said, "I decline to attend. I am not going to show up. I work for His Majesty. Not coming."]

The Governor communicated the letter to the House by Message, which was tabled. The House then adjourned. When the House reconvened on December 1, without the attendance of Major-General Carmichael, the House unanimously ordered:

That Major-General Carmichael be taken into the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, for a contempt of this House, in not attending at the Bar this day, to be examined touching a breach of the privileges of the House; and that Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant accordingly.

The House then passed a number of resolutions declaring certain actions of the Governor to have been breaches of the privileges of the House.

That is the Governor to be in breach of the privileges of the House.

On the same day, the House was commanded by the Governor, by Message, in the King's name, to attend upon him in the Council Chamber. The Governor then delivered a speech:

The House of Assembly having ordered the attendance of Commander of H.M. Forces at the Bar, and intending, as it appears to me, to enforce that order, a measure certainly novel, and giving rise to a question of the greatest magnitude, as it tends, in fact, to devolve the command of any British army in this Island upon that House, I feel it incumbent upon me, however I lament any interruption to that harmony subsisting between the different branches of this Legislature, to take such measures as shall bring so important a point before the highest authority, previous to any further proceedings.

In code words that means the matter was taken to the King of England.

● (1540)

What is interesting is this,

The Governor then prorogued the Assembly until December 27.

We are no strangers to that procedure around here.

The new session was not opened, however, until April 25, 1809 [about four months later]. In his address to the House, the Governor said:

I have it in command from His Majesty to acquaint you that he has been graciously pleased to direct a copy of the minutes of the Court-Martial to be laid before you, pursuant to your message of 2nd of November last... And I am also to acquaint you that the officers whose attendance you requested me to procure, by your message of the 22nd of November last, will be directed to attend you, without being subjected to the restrictions contained in Major-General Carmichael's order of the 25th of November last....

The House, however, was not satisfied. Following the reading of certain Journal entries in respect of Major-General Carmichael, the House ordered:

That Mr. Speaker, *pro tempore*, do issue his Warrant for taking into custody Major-General Carmichael, who was ordered into custody during the last Session on a Resolution of the House, that he had violated its privileges, and for a contempt of the House in not attending on Mr. Speaker's Summons, to be examined touching the said breaches of privilege.

On April 26, [a day later, following, I guess, a throne speech something like we have here.] Major General Carmichael was brought before the Bar of the House in the custody of the Serjeant-at-Arms. The Speaker invited him to make a statement concerning his breaches of the privileges of the House. Following Major-General Carmichael's statement, the House discharged him.

The next day, April 27, [the House still not satisfied] the House passed an Address to the Governor in respect of the King's order to Major-General Carmichael to attend the House. The House rejected the implied necessity of the King's order, and again reasserted the House's power to compel the attendance of witnesses under its own authority. The address read [in part]:

Every right and privilege exercised by the Commons House of Parliament within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, being inherent in the representatives of the people of this Island, met in General Assembly, we cannot receive as a favour, depending on the direction of His Majesty's Government, the attendance of witnesses required by the House; nor can we recognize its authority to remove the unconstitutional restrictions attempted to be imposed by Major-General Carmichael's order of the 25th of November last, which supposes the power of continuing such restrictions, or renewing them, when deemed expedient.

They rejected any authority in the King to constrain the House's witnesses.

Mr. Speaker, Parliament's role and powers to inquire and obtain information is fundamental to our role and function in our democracy. Were it otherwise, a component of our governance, our grand inquest, would be set aside, impaired and the scrutiny by this House would be crippled; and that has never happened in our entire history. Never has the right of our House to inquire been set aside or displaced and now the minister would suggest that this is not so. This purported, contorted, false and shirking constitutional definition put forward by the minister is not the Parliament designed by our ancestors, some of whom gave their lives to create and sustain it.

In advocating that a Parliament in Canada would be less than it was created to be, the minister invites us to open the door to a potential, silent, secret tyranny that, if not now then some day will be abused and misused by those with seditious, self-interested political purpose.

● (1545)

While our Constitution cannot be amended on the run, and we take some satisfaction from that, we cannot stand idly by when these suggestions are put forward by a government in this House. Our people are free and have the tools, including our Parliament's power of inquiry, to assure us that our governments are accountable to the people and not just to the legions of the self-interested and the powerful. This place serves all of our citizens and not some Holy Grail of centralized power. We have the constitutional provisions to do our job here and we will get the job done.

In conclusion, the law empowering our House to send for persons, papers and records was written long ago. The meaning and reach of that law has not changed in three centuries. The attorney general has failed to state that law here. He did not state what the law was in his remarks, not once, and he has not been able to show in any way how Parliament itself has changed it. If this law had changed, then it had to exist in the first place and he has failed to describe either, even though our constitutional law clearly provides that our parliamentary law on persons, papers and records does not change unless explicitly provided for. No House and no court has, to the best of my knowledge, ever found to the contrary, and the attorney general has not identified any decision of this House or any statutory change that explicitly changes our parliamentary law.

We do have one example in 2002 of the House actually taking steps to avoid narrowing our power of inquiry which could have resulted from a change to the Canada Evidence Act post-9/11 to better protect national security, and which was improperly described by the Minister of National Defence on December 10 as actually restricting the House. If that law actually did apply to this House, why has the government not invoked the silencing provisions of sections 37 and 38? The answer is that it knows that it cannot.

The minister's statement falsely states both that the act was strengthened to apply to Parliament, and second, that those who provide evidence to Parliament were bound by those so-called new restrictions. These false words, delivered in public, have the direct effect of slandering the powers and role of this House in deterring our witnesses, particularly those in the ranks of the armed forces, of which he is the minister.

These remarks demand retraction or clarification to protect the dignity of this House, our privileges and our function as the grand inquest. Second, the impact of the December 10 letter from the assistant deputy minister of justice has been put to the House consistently here in the debate, including the testimony of a public servant who indicates that his testimony was constrained by that advice from the Department of Justice.

On the continuing partial compliance and partial default of the government in complying with the order of this House on December 10 to provide documents. While it certainly is a circumstance reflecting breach of privilege, I would look forward to recognition of the House powers and provisions here in the House for screening and protecting sensitive documentation while at the same time making full disclosure to the special committee members on a need-to-know basis while protecting from broader public disclosure.

I would be prepared to move a motion, which I would want very much to be in collaboration with other parties and individuals in the House, and I will do my very best to do that should you, Mr. Speaker, find this to be a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

● (1550)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some comments relating to the question of privilege that I raised in the House, particularly in rebuttal to the comments made by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. I made the mistake one time as a lawyer in court of calling the presiding justice "Mr. Speaker", and I hope I will not make the opposite mistake by calling you "My Lord", but if I do, I hope you will forgive me.

I have a submission to make which is succinct but not particularly brief, because we have before us some very serious matters involving the fundamentals of our democracy. It has to do with the relationship between Parliament and the executive. Sometimes it is said that in Canada we have an elected dictatorship with prime ministers having vast powers even by comparison to the president of the United States of America in that country's republican system. One of the saving graces of our system is the importance of executive responsibility to Parliament and accountability to Parliament. In that context, the role of parliamentary privilege is of paramount importance.

Privilege

Although your ruling in this case is important because of the nature of the question, I do not believe your decision is a difficult one at this stage. You are being asked to rule whether there is a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege. In our House since the time of Speaker Michener, there are two guiding principles, which are enunciated on page 73 of O'Brien and Bosc and repeated at the beginning of appendix 15, and they are:

whether, on the first impression (*prima facie*) the matter raised appeared to be a matter of privilege, and whether the matter was raised as soon as it could have been. Both were to be determined by the Speaker before a debate could proceed.

Mr. Speaker, you have already dealt with the second condition and have ruled on March 18 that the timing of this was not an issue here. As to the first condition, whether on first impression this appears to be a matter of privilege, in my view there can be little doubt.

Much of what has been said by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons are matters that are for debate on any motion that might be put to the House, but not on whether this is on the surface a matter of privilege. Nevertheless, extensive argument has been made covering nearly two hours by the two government officials and given the seriousness of the issue, I would like to respond to the points made.

I will be dealing primarily with the question of privilege raised by me in the House, which is very similar to that raised by the member for Saint-Jean, but regarding the question of privilege by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, particularly the separate question as to whether or not the witnesses at committee may be intimidated and whether that is a breach of privileges of the House, I would refer your honour to pages 114 and 115 of O'Brien and Bosc which indicate:

Just as *prima facie* cases of privilege have been found for the intimidation of Members and their staff, the intimidation of a committee witness has also been found to be a *prima facie* breach of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on with a couple of quotes that you may find useful in dealing with the question of privilege raised by my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons made two interventions, one on March 18 and another on March 31. The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada made an extensive intervention on March 31, lasting some hour and a half. On March 18, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons raised the objection that the order of the House of December 10 would result in full exposure of all the documents into the public domain without regard to sensitivity and security concerns.

● (1555)

Not only is that not the case given that the order itself refers to Parliament having access to the documents, it was clear from the debate on the point of order raised at the time by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons that a process was contemplated that would satisfy security and other concerns about confidentiality. In debate on the point of order raised on that date, the member for Vancouver South said, at page 7873 of *Hansard* for that day:

Privilege

—there are two opinions from the law clerk that indicate that section 38 does not restrict the right of Parliament and the committee to receive documents.

This is the key point:

The committee may, by its own decisions, create a procedure whereupon if it considers any of the documents it receives as injurious to national security interests or international relations, it may not disclose those documents to third parties or may have a hearing that might be in camera. That is in fact in the opinions that I have received from the law clerk. I would be happy to pass them on, and they have been tabled in the committee.

Clearly these were matters of public record and were available, obviously, to the government members of that committee. It ensures that the committee and the House were well aware that procedures could be put in place to ensure the confidentiality and that this was all known on the day the point of order was raised and the day the debate on the motion took place in the House.

To suggest there was no consideration of security or any other concerns of that nature is just not in accordance with reality and the facts. It was clear from the beginning that there would be a procedure to protect national security interests. Also, the motion was not to table documents but to give Parliament access to the documents in an uncensored form.

The second point raised by the parliamentary secretary was in reference to two rulings made in the House, one by you, Mr. Speaker, on June 8, 2006, and another made November 2, 1983, to the effect that national security, when asserted by a minister, was sufficient to set aside a requirement to table documents cited in debate. Two points should be made in response.

First, the tabling of documents is a practice of the House which, by convention, states that if a member reads from a document, he can be required to table it. It is understandable that such a ruling would be made, as was made by you, Mr. Speaker, and prior to that, because it was necessary to avoid inadvertent disclosure of national security interests because some minister inadvertently read from a document that contained them. This is a refinement of our House practice or convention and is not a rule that is so rigid as to defy an order of the House made and contemplated by the House when such an order is made.

What we are dealing with in the matter before us is a specific House order adopted after debate and after it was ruled to be in order. It was not a simple requirement to table documents referenced in debate, but, rather, an order to make documents available to Parliament, and the precedents raised by the hon. parliamentary secretary are not applicable.

Second, the parliamentary secretary stated in his remarks on March 18 that the House has always accepted the national security justification for withholding papers from the House. This is not so. There is certainly restraint exercised, but there are occasions when Parliament and parliamentarians are privy to documents and information concerning national security issues.

Indeed, during the second world war, the House met in secret on two occasions at least to secure briefings on the war and national security was not jeopardized. Also, committees dealing with the review of intelligence services have had access to important confidential information with appropriate measures taken to ensure security of that information.

On March 31, the parliamentary secretary made a somewhat more brief intervention raising a fourth objection, stating that the order of the House of December 10 was a nullity because the order was not what he called a humble address to the Governor General praying that she will cause to be laid before the House particular documents. The hon. parliamentary secretary quoted O'Brien and Bosc, at page 1121, in support of that submission.

• (1600)

That reference is under the heading "Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers" and suggests that members may choose to give a notice of motion requesting certain papers or documents be compiled or produced by the government and tabled in the House. There is an opportunity to object and if the objection is made, it can be set aside for debate.

With the greatest of respect to the hon. parliamentary secretary, in my view he is totally confusing form and substance, and in the case of this objection, he is grasping at straws.

First, the reference to O'Brien and Bosc concerns an item in routine proceedings called "notices of motions for the production of papers" and relates to the requirements for tabling of documents in the House of Commons. The relevant minister is given the opportunity to object and if he or she does, it may be set over for debate.

Page 470 of O'Brien and Bosc states:

The Speaker is responsible for ensuring that the motion...is in proper form; that is, that it is the appropriate motion to do what is sought to be done.

A motion, if debated and adopted, then becomes an order of the House. That is the nature of routine proceedings for a notice of motion, not very different from a written question on the order paper asking for certain documents.

Even if we were operating under routine proceedings, which we were not, no objection was raised to the form of the motion at that time, and it was ruled by you, Mr. Speaker, to be in order.

The government had a full opportunity to raise objections to the motion that was moved by the member for Vancouver South on December 10, and indeed, it exercised that opportunity, but it made no objection to the form of the order and it cannot do so now.

In any event the distinction between an address and an order is not relevant in the context of the motion that was actually put to the House on December 10, 2009 because we were not dealing with routine proceedings, and in fact it was ruled to be in order.

The point of order that was raised on December 10 is itself quite relevant to the decision that you, Mr. Speaker, are called upon to make on whether or not the non-compliance with the order is *prima facie* a question of privilege.

By way of a point of order, various members on the government side, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, all raised objections to the motion suggesting it was not in order and was beyond the power of the House. In fact, much of the argument made by the parliamentary secretary and the Minister of Justice on the question of privilege, which you, Mr. Speaker, have heard over the last several sessions, were made during the point of order. The whole debate on the point of order is worth reviewing by you, Mr. Speaker, in that regard when you are making your decision on this prima facie case issue.

At the end of the submission on the point of order, Mr. Speaker, you made your ruling, found at page 7876 of *Hansard* where you quote from O'Brien and Bosc, pages 978 and 979 as follows:

The Standing Orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the type of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist—in hard copy or electronic format—and that they are located in Canada.

Here is the important point:

No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in the House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records.

I will go back to page 136 of O'Brien and Bosc to further this:

By virtue of the Preamble and section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, Parliament has the ability to institute its own inquiries, to require the attendance of witnesses and to order the production of documents, rights which are fundamental to its proper functioning. These rights are as old as Parliament itself. Maingot states:

The only limitations, which could only be self-imposed, would be that any inquiry should relate to a subject within the legislative competence of Parliament, particularly where witnesses and documents are required and the penal jurisdiction of Parliament is contemplated. This dovetails with the right of each House of Parliament to summon and compel the attendance of all persons within the limits of their jurisdictions.

• (1605)

You then make a ruling on the point of order in the following terms on page 7877 of *Hansard*. It states:

We now have this motion here, and it seems to me that the House has the power to do what a committee can do and then some. A committee could have requested this and demanded the production of these materials. The House can also do whatever a committee can do and then some. Accordingly I feel the motion is in order and I will allow the matter to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, your ruling is not subject to appeal. On page 636-7 of O'Brien and Bosc it states as follows in relation to rulings or points of order:

When a decision on a question of order is reached, the Speaker supports it with quotations from the Standing Orders or other authorities, or simply by citing the number of the applicable Standing Order. Once the decision is rendered, the matter is no longer open to debate or discussion and the ruling may not be appealed to the House.

What we had happening in the submissions by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada is an attempt to re-argue the point of order and this is not permissible.

It may be possible to hear these arguments again on the merits of the House adopting a particular motion, which might be brought forward, should you find a prima facie case, but it cannot be

Privilege

considered in the debate that we are having now on whether or not a prima facie case exists in my submission.

However, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada did make several substantive points concerning questions of privilege, which I will now address fairly briefly because when condensed and understood there are not that many.

He suggested that questions of privilege should be considered in light of two guiding principles and those principles he suggested were first, as well established in law and parliamentary practice, that the principle of necessity must underscore matters of privilege. Second, as parliamentarians we should always be guided by a principle of great restraint when asserting privileges of the House.

With these two propositions, I do agree. They are in fact correct.

With respect to the first proposition, the fact that the principle of necessity must underscore matters of privilege, it was recognized in the Vaid case in the Supreme Court of Canada, paragraph 40 which is quoted in O'Brien and Bosc at page 78 as follows:

The primary question asked by the courts is whether the claimed privilege is necessary for the House of Commons and its Members to carry out their parliamentary functions of deliberating, legislating and holding the government to account, without interference from the executive or the courts.

Nothing could be clearer than that, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the principle of necessity and the parliamentary function of the legislature of the House of Commons to hold the government to account without interference from the executive or the courts.

The motion, to order access to the uncensored documents, is firmly based on the necessity of Parliament to be able to hold the government to account, clearly recognizes one of its important functions and obligations. This is basic constitutional law but is also fundamental to our parliamentary democracy.

The claims of necessity to hold the government to account is, in fact, underscored by the approach which the government has taken with respect to the whole issue of Afghan detainees both in the House and in its failure to abide by the order of the House in producing uncensored documents.

I will give but one example which underscores the necessity principle. The example relates to a revelation made by the Chief of the Defence Staff in December of last year to correct his testimony given the day before, and that was on December 9 I believe, before the defence committee.

• (1610)

In correcting his testimony, he quoted a report on a July 2006 incident where Canadian Forces soldiers had in fact passed over some detainees, people who had been arrested, to the Afghans. He quoted a report from a Canadian Forces section commander the following effect:

We then photographed the individual prior to handing him over, to ensure that if the ANP did assault him, as has happened in the past, we would have a visual record of his condition

In the original document released by the government concerning this particular report, all the report said:

We then photographed the individual.

Privilege

The rest of the document was blacked out. So anybody reading this document, members of Parliament or anybody else, would say, "Oh, they took a photograph of this individual and then they passed him over". Well, what was that for? Was it for identification purposes? Was it for a collection of photographs for someone who liked taking pictures? What was it for?

The crux of that whole issue was twofold. First, we took the photograph because we were afraid he was going to be abused "as had happened in the past". That reveals, first of all, prior knowledge of abuse of Afghan detainees.

Second, it contradicted statements made in this House by the Minister of National Defence on numerous occasions, too numerous to mention, but they could be enumerated, they are all in *Hansard*, that there was no evidence of Canadian detainees being abused by Afghan authorities.

What do we have here? We have a situation where the necessity principle cries out for Parliament to undertake its work to hold the government to account.

We cannot rely on the decisions made by the government to black out documents in accordance with whatever rules, arbitrary rules or whatever rules they are and whoever is applying them, under the principle of necessity. We cannot devolve from our duty and our obligations to hold the government to account without interference. I could say that the blacking out of these documents is, in fact, interference by the executive in that Parliament is not able to undertake its duties.

In the submission of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada he also referred to the second principle, which he said we should be guided by as parliamentarians, the principle of great restraint when asserting the privileges of this House. I agree with that in general terms.

I have to agree with it because the dignity of this House and the respect for the place of Parliament demands that we take our privileges seriously. And they are not our privileges, they are not personal to us. They are privileges that we as a collective hold and guard on behalf of the people of Canada, and that you, Mr. Speaker, as the Speaker of this House, are called upon to stand up for and defend against the Crown, against the Monarch as Speakers in the past have done, in some cases at the cost of their heads.

That is why when the time comes for a Speaker to be elected, after he is elected, he is reluctantly dragged up to the Chair to take on the onerous responsibilities of standing up to the Crown and to the government. For that, sir, we commend you for your courage in doing so. We also commend your courage in deciding this important question on behalf of all Canadians.

Restraint is in order. There is no question about that. I think members of this House, at least on the question of production of documents, have shown some restraint. It has been some 143 days, I believe, or 123 days since the order was made. We are getting badgered by the press, wondering how long we are prepared to wait.

We are doing this in a proper way and in a deliberate way. From the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, we heard a very scholarly, deliberate and expansive reference to the authorities going

back, not quite into time in memoriam but several centuries. This is an institution and a tradition that we have reason to be proud of because it is our parliamentary democracy.

• (1615)

However, in talking about the restraint, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General talked about a report from the United Kingdom in 1967.

First, I should say that the report was not adopted by the British House of Commons. I also think it is important to note that our own *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, known as O'Brien and Bosc, reports on page 67 that the British House of Commons now takes a more narrowly defined view of privilege than was formerly the case, with the emphasis being placed on parliamentary proceedings. Then the change became apparent in 1967 and refers to that report.

That is not something that has taken place here, Mr. Speaker, as was evident from your ruling given on December 10, which I referred to a few moments ago, in which you stated that this House has not restricted its privileges in any way.

The minister went on to quote O'Brien and Bosc's citation of Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* that:

A genuine question of privilege is therefore a serious matter not to reckoned with lightly...and thus rarely raised in the House of Commons.

I guess I can agree with that in general terms. It depends what is meant by "rarely". Because if we look at appendix 15 to our O'Brien and Bosc, there are in fact 51 separate decisions by Speakers from 1960 to June 2008 where prima facie cases of privilege were acknowledged by this House and dealt with in various ways. That does not count the ones that were raised and not found to be a prima facie case. So, it may be infrequent, but I would not go so far as to call it rare if we have, on average, one a year which is found to be a genuine question of privilege.

He also talked about the fact that:

In Australia the government routinely relies on crown privilege to withhold confidential information...and a senate committee in Australia acknowledged as much last month—

Now, I do not know exactly what goes on in Australia and whether it is comparable or not, but the quote itself belies the point made by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General because it said:

"there are certain documents which although it may have the power to receive, the Senate ought refrain from demanding".

That is a suggestion. It does not diminish the powers at all. He then said:

Odgers' Australian Senate Practice also states while the Senate undoubtedly possesses a power to send for papers and records:

"While the Senate undoubtedly possesses this power, it is acknowledged that there is some information held by government which ought not to be disclosed".

Then the quotation states that this is based on some postulated immunity.

The minister went on with his citation:

“While the Senate has not conceded that claims of public interest immunity by the executive are anything more than claims, and not established prerogatives, it has usually not sought to enforce demands for evidence or documents against a ministerial refusal to provide them but has adopted other remedies”.

Usually, I am suggesting this is an unusual case. I think the debate in this House over the last six months has made it clear that this is indeed an unusual case and both of those authorities recognize that these legislatures, in that case, the Senate of Australia, have the power to do that.

Some of the other questions raised by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General were also raised before by him and by the parliamentary secretary. I have already dealt with them, so I am not going to go into detail. However, they have said that there is no *prima facie* breach of privilege because the government has taken steps to respond to the December order in a responsible manner.

However, the minister also indicated that he thought it was premature because there was no time limit set out in the order of December 10. There may not have been a time limit set out, but it is pretty clear from the order itself that there was a sense of urgency.

• (1620)

In the preamble it says that “the House urgently requires access to the following documents”, and then in the last paragraph, it says, “accordingly the House hereby orders that these documents be produced in their original and uncensored form forthwith”. As I indicated before, forthwith may not be an exact type of statement, but it certainly indicates that there is some urgency and that it has to be done without delay.

We have had considerable delay and that is not something that should be taken as a serious objection to the motion for a *prima facie* breach, although it is not a *prima facie* breach. I think the minister misconstrues that. It is a *prima facie* question of privilege. The House will then decide what to do about it.

He goes on at length to say that “the question raised is primarily one of debate rather than privilege”. He then goes on to debate all of the issues, many of which were already raised by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons. I have already dealt with them.

However, there are considerable matters of debate there. I think the debate he talks about is a debate that would take place once a motion has been put to the floor. If you find, as I hope you will and think you should, Mr. Speaker, that there is a *prima facie* question of privilege, then a motion will be put. I have indicated the nature of the motion that I am prepared to put. It can be debated, amended and considered. All of these questions that were brought before the House by the Minister of Justice can be considered by members in determining whether to exercise the powers that it has and what to do in relation to that question of privilege.

I go back to the beginning of my remarks in suggesting that the question of privilege that has to be determined by you now, Mr. Speaker, is whether there is a *prima facie* question of privilege, not whether there is a *prima facie* breach. I think some people have talked about that in their remarks. It is pretty obvious that the Conservatives have failed to produce uncensored documents. The documents that were tabled in the House were heavily blacked out.

Privilege

They were not documents in their uncensored form. Again, that is a matter for debate.

Going back to page 73 of O'Brien and Bosc, it talks about the 14th edition of Erskine May and the modern way of raising questions of privilege. It states:

This description of the British procedure soon became a handy reference seized upon by successive Speakers, beginning with Speaker Michener, as a way to curtail spurious interventions by Members on non privilege matters. It introduced two guiding conditions: whether on the first impression (*prima facie*) the matter raised appeared to be a matter of privilege, and whether the matter was raised as soon as it could have been.

As I said at the outset, you have already dealt with the second part, Mr. Speaker. The question now is whether this question raised before you appears to be a matter of privilege at first impression. I realize it is a bit late to have a first impression, because we have given all sorts of lengthy arguments about what kind of impression we may have of the original question.

I guess in your deliberations, Mr. Speaker, you will have to go back to the first impression and find whether this does appear, on first impression, to be a matter of privilege. Does it deal with a question of privilege? For me at least, it appears to be beyond doubt that we are dealing with the privileges of the House. How we deal with them is a matter for debate, a matter for motion and a matter for the House to determine once it has been determined that it is a question of privilege.

I think that has been recognized as well by the courts. I referred in my original raising of the question of privilege to the Nova Scotia broadcasting case. It was recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada that once a question of privilege had been raised, it is up to the Parliament to decide what to do with that.

That is where we are at right now. We will await your ruling, Mr. Speaker, after you have the opportunity to review the remarks and the authorities. These are my submissions and I thank you for your kind attendance.

• (1625)

[Translation]

The Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier, Citizenship and Immigration.

[English]

The hon. member for Yukon has some submissions on this same point. I will hear him. I understand he will be brief. Then we will move to the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the time that the original question was raised by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, I mentioned I would be giving more technical details on a precedent related to this very significant debate on the supremacy of Parliament, this important constitutional question.

When witnesses appear before committee, members of the committee may order that witnesses produce documents related to the topic under discussion. Committees are empowered to order such production under section 108 of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.

Privilege

The Privacy Act protects the personal information collected by government institutions. Section 8(1) of the Privacy Act serves as a default provision, stating that personal information under control of a government entity shall not be disclosed without consent. However under our law, the power of the Committee to require the production of these documents is not diminished or affected by any statutory provision unless that provision expressly states so.

That is from Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, House of Commons of Canada and McGill University Press, 1997, page 20, and Arthur Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms of the House of Commons of Canada*, the Carswell Company Limited, Toronto, 1958, page 96.

This Privacy Act provision does not do so, and does not restrict the Committee's powers. In fact, and although unnecessary for our purposes here, under section 8(2) (c), the Privacy Act does not apply if the documents are requested by "a person or body with jurisdiction to compel the production of information."

Parliament is not bound by the Privacy Act, and has a right to have any documents laid before it which it believes are necessary. This principle was established in Canada through the Constitution Act 1867, which passed the "privileges immunities and powers" of the British House of Commons into Canadian law at the time of Confederation.

We can see this in the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, May 29, 1990, Issue 39, page 3; December 4, 1990, Issue 56, page 3; December 18, 1990, Issue 57, pages 4-6; *Journals* of the House of Commons, December 19, 1990, page 2508; February 28, 1991, page 2638; *Debates* of the House of Commons, February 28, 1991, pages 1745-6; *Journals*, May 17, 1991, page 42, May 29, 1991, page 92-99, June 18, 1991, pages 216-7; and the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, June 19, 1991, Issue No. 4, pages 5-6.

The power to send for records has been delegated by the House of Commons to its committees in the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. A committee's power to call for persons, papers and records is said to be absolute, but seldom exercised without consideration of the public interest.

We can see that in the *Journals* of May 29, 1991.

The law clerk provided the committee with a legal opinion on the powers of the committees pertaining to the production of documents. The legal opinion summarized the applicability of statutes to Parliament under the Canadian Constitution and cited a precedent from the Supreme Court of Canada that Parliament has an adjudicative role as the "grand inquest of the nation". The law clerk concluded:

in summary, constitutional law has priority over statute law, that is, the provisions of a statute such as the Privacy Act are to be read in a manner that is consistent with the constitutional laws of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada has affirmed that no part of the Constitution, including the Charters of Rights and Freedoms, prevails over any other part of the Constitution, including constitutional powers, immunities and other rights that constitute the parliamentary privileges of the House and its committees.

We can see that in the case of *New Brunswick Broadcasting Co. v. Nova Scotia (Speaker of the House of Assembly)* [1993], 1 S.C.R. 319, *Canada (House of Commons) v. Vaid* [2005], 1 S.C.R. 667.

Accordingly, there can be no doubt that as a matter of law, the power of a House committee to order the production of documents prevails over the seemingly contrary provisions of a statute, including the Privacy Act.

• (1630)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I

appreciate all of the comments by my hon. colleagues. I particularly appreciate the comments from the hon. member for Yukon for being so brief. I will also observe brevity. As you know, I have made an intervention on this a few weeks ago. I am also firmly convinced that you will give all submissions on the matter your most careful consideration.

I only want to make two quick comments on the interventions made today by the member for St. John's East and the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

With respect to the comments made by the member for St. John's East, he stated in his intervention that the special committee on Afghanistan may put into place provisions or mechanisms to deal with the security issue to ensure that sensitive documents are treated appropriately. The fact is, and it was verified by the member for St. John's East today, there are no such mechanisms in place currently. The committee has not put any provisions in place currently to deal with matters of national security to ensure that those matters are dealt with appropriately.

I reiterate my position that while it is fine to say the committee may put in such provisions, we have seen none. The House order of December 10 speaks not of any provisions, of any mechanism. I believe we cannot, simply on a wish and a prayer, hand over documents concerning national security issues to a committee that does not have any provisions to ensure that confidential and security matters will be observed in the manner in which they should. That is the first point.

With respect to the comments made by my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River, while I appreciate his submission, I would also point out that my colleague has obviously been a learned man. He is sincere in his comments. I believe you would agree, Mr. Speaker, that all comments and all submissions made by members of the House should be taken seriously and their words should be taken at face value.

I would point out some of the words that my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River stated about five years ago, in fact in April 2005. These comments and statements were just recently brought to my attention and that is why I am entering them on to the record today, but I would suggest that his comments are as relevant today as they were in 2005. While the member for Scarborough—Rouge River in 2005 was a member of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, he stated:

In my view and experience of national security areas, where I've been fairly involved over the last 15-plus years, the foreign partners of Canada would have absolutely no appetite to begin sharing information with Canada on security matters if access were to be in the hands of an access commissioner.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is a clear admission by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River that sharing sensitive security information, unredacted, could cause serious implications for Canada's national security. In other words, our allies would have to think twice about sharing sensitive intelligence about Canada.

Privilege

I realize that in the statement on April 2005, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River was referring to providing unredacted information to an access commissioner and not to members of Parliament. However, I would suggest, and I think it is fair to say, that the member should agree with me when I say that our foreign partners would probably be as uncomfortable with Parliament sharing information with members of Parliament as they would be uncomfortable with Parliament sharing sensitive information with an access commissioner, particularly so, since we have already had an example where members from the special committee on Afghanistan have broken confidentiality provisions by tweeting comments from in camera sessions.

How would our allies and our partners worldwide have any confidence that Parliament would be able to treat national security issues with the proper respect that they deserve when we have on record evidence of members of that committee breaking those confidences by tweeting confidential information? I repeat, we cannot take assurances from the opposition members that national security documents, if provided in an unredacted form, would be treated with the confidence and propriety that they deserve.

• (1635)

We have no proof of that, and as I said only a few moments ago, I would suggest that the comments by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River in 2005, stating that we should not hand over sensitive documents to an access commissioner because it would be inappropriate and would not give our security partners worldwide the confidence to continue to provide us with sensitive intelligence information, are just as relevant today as they were then.

It is a clear admission, as I said before, a clear admission by the member for Scarborough—Rouge River that we have to be able to allow the executive to determine when matters of national security need to be preserved and not turned over to Parliament or any committee.

Mr. Speaker, I know you will consider this submission and all submissions with all the gravity and judiciousness you can muster. Finally, I would say that I hope, on behalf of all parliamentarians, these interventions are given the most gravity your office can possibly give them and a ruling will come down as quickly as possible so Parliament can move forward.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to this debate today as well as to previous submissions that have been made in Parliament. I recognize that you are the longest-serving Speaker of this chamber, and it says much about your ability to be able to parse an awful lot of the stuff that ends up going in your direction. It also says a lot about the confidence members have in your judgments.

I would suggest there are a couple of practical issues here. First off, I happen to sit on the special committee on Afghanistan and I have never been able to figure it out. Even if the information was given to the members of the committee, myself being one, we could not use it. It is information that is highly secret, information that many nations in the world would have a lot of difficulty with the release of, if we take into account the submission of my colleague.

We may be able to consider it, but how would we be able to put it in the public domain, in any event? It is information that is being shielded because of the public interest, information that is being shielded because of our concern for our armed forces and personnel who are putting their lives on the line minute by minute, second by second, not only in Afghanistan but in other parts of the world. If this information is given to the committee, how can the committee use it? It cannot.

It cannot use it, because if it were to use it and come forward with particular conclusions without revealing what the information was, the people of Canada still would not accept that explanation. They would want to know on what basis the committee came to that conclusion. The fallacy of committee members asking for uncensored or unredacted information is evident in and of itself.

Furthermore, I take a little exception to my friend from the NDP trying to indicate that these redactions, these blank pages, happened by some kind of whim, as if there were no organization to it. Mr. Speaker, of course, you would be fully aware, as I think most Canadians are, although perhaps my friend from the NDP is not, that redactions are very common in legal proceedings and are covered under the Canada Evidence Act.

These are not whimsical redactions. These redactions are done by people who are completely outside the political process, particularly the partisan political process, who are looking at the best interests of our nation and the people who have gone to Afghanistan and are putting their lives on the line.

Here is where we are. I have been really quite interested over the last decade in watching many of the decisions that have been made by the Supreme Court of Canada, particularly on the issue of the charter. As we have seen the Supreme Court come to some conclusions, some of us have been marginally and sometimes grotesquely critical, but nonetheless we watch what has been going on.

It has come to the conclusion in many instances, notwithstanding what the law is, that for the common good, for the good of the nation, the people of Canada and society, notwithstanding what the charter or the Constitution may say, the decision to go in the other direction would be in the best interests of the people of Canada. Mr. Speaker, I suggest that you have that opportunity.

I recognize, as did my colleague from Saskatchewan, the expertise of the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, particularly his ability to bring forward many of these historic precedents. These are good lessons, lessons that could be taught in universities well into the future. It is good history, which is good to know, but we come down to the basic fact.

Government Orders

•(1640)

Number one, the evidence the committee is looking for, should it be brought forward, in practical terms could not be used by the committee in any event. You, sir, have the opportunity to judge that, notwithstanding all the arguments, the fact is that this information, for the good of our nation, for the protection of our armed forces, cannot possibly be brought forward. As a consequence, I would suggest your judgment might be to consider that, notwithstanding all the arguments, you might save the opposition members from their own folly, you might give them a way out of this box they have put themselves into, because there is no responsible government of any partisan description that, as Government of Canada, could possibly release these documents in an unredacted and a grossly irresponsible form. It could not happen.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest you might come back with the judgment that, notwithstanding all the good arguments that all lead in this particular direction, the practical reality is that my judgment must be that this question of privilege fail.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. members for their interventions on this point.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Saint-Jean raised the same question the week before our Easter break.

We have had other comments today. I will take everything into consideration.

[English]

I will come back to the House in due course with a ruling on this matter now that I think all sides have finally completed their submissions on the point, after lengthy discussion.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation act.

This is not a bill that meets the needs of the residents of Mississauga—Brampton South. The people of my constituency of Mississauga—Brampton South need real and timely investments in infrastructure, not a drop in the bucket as the mayor of Mississauga indicated last week when the Prime Minister came to my constituency to make an announcement on infrastructure. According to the mayor, it was “not even a drop in the bucket” of the amount of investment that is needed in infrastructure.

The residents need support for small businesses that encourages job creation rather than slapping them with a \$13 billion payroll tax. They need real options for child care, not just a few dollars or a \$100

cheque that leaves them on their own to fend for themselves. They need affordable housing, not waiting lists that continue to grow. I will indicate how long the waiting list has grown in my constituency. They need an immigration policy that works, rather than preventing skilled immigrants from contributing to our economy. As many have indicated, and there have been numerous studies done on this, immigration is the key to our economic turnaround.

Simply put, the residents of Mississauga—Brampton South want and deserve a government that works for them.

On infrastructure, the government has repeatedly delayed giving our cities what they need. When it does give money, it is often either insufficient or so tied up with rules or red tape that it fails to meet its own goals.

For example, back in March 2007, the Prime Minister announced that his government would pay the federal share of five transit projects in the greater Toronto area, including Mississauga's rapid transit system. Of course the money never flowed and the city kept on waiting and waiting for the Prime Minister to keep his word.

In September 2007, I, along with my Liberal colleagues from Mississauga, demanded that the government release the money but still nothing happened. Finally, in February 2008, almost a year after the Prime Minister made his promise, the finance minister staged another flashy photo-op promising the money was on its way.

Announcing and re-announcing money may be good for getting the minister's picture in the paper but it does nothing to assist the needs and the requirements of the city of Mississauga, real legitimate transit needs. I believe it is still waiting for that money.

Then we have the stimulus money indicated in this budget that is currently winding down. Of course we know that the government never had any intention of offering any stimulus until they were backed into a corner by the opposition. There was no real plan put forward by the government.

The government realized, when it felt the pressure from the opposition parties, that it must do something. When it finally did agree, it ensured that the money went overwhelmingly to Conservative ridings. It spent hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars on partisan advertising. The Conservatives forced the city of Mississauga to spend \$90,000 putting up economic action plan signs and a further \$5,000 on signs for the RInC program.

Government Orders

With all that money spent on promotion, one would expect that the government would be able to get the actual program money into the economy on time, but sadly that has not been the case. Take, for example, the RInC program. The allocation for Mississauga is approximately \$6 million to help upgrade city pools. After a year, only \$664,000 has been spent, resulting in eight jobs being created. By the finance minister's own admission, stimulus funds had to begin within 120 days in order to really be effective. According to the finance minister's own assessment, the RInC program in Mississauga has been a failure in terms of stimulating the economy when it was most needed. If the money is not spent by the deadline allocated by the government, the cities are left with the tab.

In summary, when it comes to infrastructure in this budget and the government's program, it has created a partisan system based on signs, exposure and promotion. It has designed the system to fail with all the red tape and it has created no real jobs.

With respect to small businesses, as indicated earlier on in my remarks, one of the worst things this budget does is raise taxes on small businesses. This is yet another broken promise from a government that promised not to raise taxes. We all remember the government's infamous move when it taxed income trusts, which hurt the investments and retirement savings of many Canadians. The government broke its promise there as well.

• (1645)

In fact, this is no modest increase when it comes to payroll taxes. The budget increase amounts to \$13 billion, an amount estimated to kill over 200,000 jobs. I will put that to the House on a per person level. For two people, that equates to roughly \$1,264. For a company that employs about 10 people, that is an additional cost of \$8,884. By imposing this tax, the government is creating substantial increases to the operating costs of a business.

At a recent small business summit that I held in my constituency of Mississauga—Brampton South with the leader of the official opposition, we heard from over 250 businesses. Time and time again they reiterated their opposition to this payroll tax. They said that it was counter-productive, that it hurt their business prospects and that it killed jobs.

The Liberal Party has a different approach. We want to create jobs and support small businesses. We put together three concrete proposals to do that. We would like to support our manufacturing sector, which is an essential part of the economic turnaround specifically in Ontario but also within the greater Toronto area and in the riding of Mississauga—Brampton South.

First, we have put forward a proposal to increase the capital cost allowance to help manufacturers purchase new equipment, support the tax system so they would have the incentive to buy new equipment to help their productivity and to ensure they are more competitive.

Second, we want to tackle the worst youth employment in a generation by introducing a financial incentive to hire young Canadians.

Third, we want to encourage investment in start-up companies by introducing additional tax measures for Canadians who invest in entrepreneurs and start-up companies in sectors such as clean energy

and life sciences. These are key and important sectors in my constituency that are growing and creating jobs. This would provide additional support for them to continue on that path.

One of the reasons why I do not support this budget is that it does nothing to create more early learning day care spaces, which are in desperate need in my constituency. The previous Liberal government signed agreements with all of the provinces and territories to create a national child care and early learning program. The Conservatives threw these agreements in the garbage and replaced them with a modest cheque program. Again, people have to fend for themselves and good luck.

I want to put in perspective what this means to my constituency.

As I indicated before, the government created no new child care spaces. What does that mean for the residents of Mississauga—Brampton South? For every 1,000 kids there are approximately 10.5 spaces. The probability of parents being able to send their kids to an early learning and day care facility is about 1 in 100, or a 1% opportunity, because that is the limited space that exists in the region of Peel and in my riding.

The Liberal Party has committed to learning and innovation through a pan-Canadian learning approach spanning early childhood development, aboriginal education, workforce literacy, language training for new Canadians and access to higher education and training. Those are the types of investments we were looking for in the budget but, unfortunately, we did not see them.

The next point I want to raise with respect to the budget is affordable housing.

Despite being a prosperous community, or perhaps because of it, Peel region has an enormous demand for affordable housing, another area that this budget does not address. In fact, according to the region's own numbers, applicants face waiting lists of many years. It started with 8 years and during the tenure of the Conservative government it has gone up to 12 years, which is simply too long to go without affordable accommodation.

How do we deal with this crisis? Why has the government not put forward a proposal? According to this bill, the government has no example of what it wants to do. So we put forward a national housing strategy, a real issue for middle-class Canadians.

With respect to immigration, we want to ensure we have a system that provides additional resources for application processing, more support for immigrant settlement and an increase in the number of permanent residents Canada accepts.

Government Orders

Last week, the member for Mississauga—Erindale blamed the mayor for the city's problems with infrastructure saying that, "She has been the mayor for 31 years. If there is an infrastructure deficit, shouldn't she bear some personal responsibility for that"? This was compounded by a comment made by the Minister of Finance when he called the mayor "grumpy" and told her "You know, you've got to control your expenses". Any time people raise legitimate concerns about infrastructure, especially our mayor, she is attacked.

The government, through the budget bill, has imposed a \$13 billion tax on small businesses. It has not created any new child care spaces and there are still wait lists for affordable housing. These are just some examples of why I do not support this bill.

• (1650)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned the housing strategy among many other things. On the housing strategy, the Liberals were in power for over 13 years and they still did not address it even though they kept saying that they would. So, it is a little late on that one. They also talked about pay equity earlier today, which touches on the budget again. They supported the budget that took pay equity away. He talked a lot about small businesses and I really appreciate his comments on taxes, especially the EI taxes and how that will impact the EI premiums. The Conservatives keep saying that it is not a tax but it is and we need to know what impact that will have on small businesses.

The budget actually still deals with the HST. Maybe he could remind us how he voted on the question of the HST. Small businesses certainly do not support the HST because of the impact it will have on their business. More so, first nations communities in my area certainly do not support it because it impacts gravely on them. Could the member talk to us about that?

• (1655)

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question on a range of issues that she brought forward with respect to the comments I made on Bill C-9.

On the first point about housing, I would remind her in our budgets from when I was elected in 2004-05, we invested millions of dollars in housing and this was after we put our fiscal house in order. However, more important, with respect to the infrastructure, under Mr. Martin we came up with a gas tax transfer, a new deal for municipalities that really provided cities with sustainable funding.

With respect to EI, the member raises a good point because this is a payroll tax. There have been numerous independent studies. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business indicated that this would cause a loss of 200,000 jobs, which is why it is termed as a job-killing payroll tax. The amount is \$13 billion. As indicated in my remarks, for a family of two that amounts to an additional cost of \$1,264 on an annualized basis, and for a company that employs about 10 people, that amounts to approximately \$8,884 on an annualized basis. That is a substantial amount of money in terms of a tax burden on small businesses and on middle-class families. Again, it does not help our productivity or competitiveness and, more important, it does not help us create jobs.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, near the end of his speech the member lauded Hazel

McCallion, the mayor of his municipality. The government has shown such disrespect for municipal politicians. The member for Nepean—Carleton slammed them on an open line radio show. Generally the comments he ascribed to Conservative MPs dancing around Hazel McCallion as she gives her own press conference.

The government must be aware that this is the first level of democracy, the grassroots. The people first elected are the municipal people. They balance their budgets by law. They speak what the people want. They take calls all the time on a local level and they must be respected.

FCM has been covered into accepting whatever crumbs fall from the government table and it is not speaking its true mind. In this place, the member can speak for his community and tell us how in this era of lack of respect for municipal leaders, how municipalities are coping in this dark age.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for the work he has done at the municipal level. I know he has represented his constituency at all levels, but in particular at a municipal level he has done a fantastic job.

The point he raises is very important and it is the fact that the infrastructure program was designed to fail. The money has not come out in sufficient time to create the jobs. It was done in a partisan manner and, more important, any criticism as pointed out by any municipal leader, specifically in Mississauga, the following is said. I want to put this on record because it is very important.

In 2007, the mayor of Mississauga called the federal government to invest in infrastructure and the response from the Minister of Finance was to call her "grumpy" and tell her that she needs to control her expenses.

Last week, the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Erindale hovered around the mayor during a press conference and was being rude and obnoxious. He finally interrupted and went on the record saying, "she has been the mayor for 31 years and if there is an infrastructure deficit she should bear some personal responsibility for that", again making personal—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak in the debate on Bill C-9, the budget implementation act or, as the Conservatives prefer to call it, the jobs and economic growth act, which unfortunately I do not believe it is.

Government Orders

We know this is a significant piece of legislation. It is 800 pages long and there is lots of stuff in it, but I think the fundamental piece of the Conservatives' economic program is maintained by this legislation, their commitment to the huge corporate tax cuts they have been pursuing and continue to pursue. We know there is another \$6 billion in corporate tax cuts happening again this year, which seems a little crazy given the fact that we are now in a deficit position and that we are going ahead with those kinds of corporate tax cuts even though it means essentially borrowing the money to give the big banks and the big oil companies, to give profitable corporations those tax cuts.

We know we are already completely competitive. We are well below the American corporate tax rate, even though we pay significantly more in public services here in Canada. And we depend more on public services, because we believe that Canadians working together can provide important services to each other, like our health care system, something the Americans are struggling to cotton on to, as time proceeds. Unfortunately, the legislation before us does not change that commitment and does not allow for the investment of that \$6 billion in services and other programs that will actually benefit Canadians.

Last week we had a week away from the House of Commons and were back in our constituencies. Working in my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas, I met with many constituents, in my office and at events in the community. Folks had a lot to say about the current economic situation and the situation in which they find themselves. I have to say that people are quite worried and some are very, very angry. I met with one gentleman who is very concerned about his ability to retire. He is coming up to retirement in a couple of years and does not feel he will be able to do that because of the current economic situation. He feels he has no economic security. He does not trust the pension system that is in place and feels he will have to keep working, when he has worked hard all his life. He will not be able to enjoy that time he had anticipated.

I understand that many people are concerned about the pension system in Canada. We know that many seniors who rely on old age security and the guaranteed income supplement still live in poverty. Yet government will go ahead with the tax cuts to the largest corporations when, if it put only \$700 million of that \$6 billion in tax cuts that are happening this year toward old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, we could make sure no senior in Canada lives in poverty.

I think it is a goal that we could all get behind, that all of our communities would be behind. We also know that, in terms of economic stimulus, every dollar we put into that program is spent in our communities. That is direct economic stimulus in our communities. Nobody saves that money. All of that money is spent on goods and services in our communities, which will help all of our communities. Why we are not going down that road, I certainly do not know, and the gentleman I was speaking to in Burnaby last week did not get it either.

Another very disturbing thing we learned over the weekend was that even some of our veterans are forced to go to food banks, in Calgary of all places. The Calgary poppy fund operates a veterans' food bank. That is a veterans' food bank. People who have honourably served Canada are forced to go to a food bank sponsored

by the poppy fund for food, furniture, medical care, rent and all kinds of basic necessities. This is unbelievable. There are apparently 60 clients on the list each month for this veterans' food bank in Calgary. A number of Conservative cabinet ministers, I think even the Prime Minister, have helped out with this food bank. I think it is outrageous that veterans, of all people, who have given their service to this country, are forced to go to a food bank. If that does not show that there is a problem with our economy and our attitude toward seniors and people who have served their country, I do not know what does. It is absolutely outrageous and appalling.

In British Columbia, one cannot have a conversation with a person on the street or a constituent without hearing about the HST. That campaign in British Columbia has moved into the legislature, where the NDP opposition is taking on the government on this new tax. It will see a 7% increase in taxes on many commodities, goods and services in British Columbia.

● (1700)

When we were debating that here in the House, the Conservatives loved to say it was British Columbia that wanted it and we were just making it possible for British Columbia to implement this new tax.

Now in British Columbia we hear the minister of finance saying we have to do this because Ottawa did it. We have to do it because Ottawa is doing it.

We knew they were setting that up, to blame each other for this new tax.

It is going to affect so many things. We have estimated that an average family will pay \$790 more, but we know it is going to affect things like housing costs. Recently the Rental Owners and Managers Association of British Columbia indicated that things like maintenance and management contracts, condo fees and those kinds of things are going to face an increase, which will require that rents go up as landlords try to recover some of the money they are going to have to pay out in new fees when the HST comes into effect in British Columbia on July 1.

We also know that the HST initiative campaign is under way now in British Columbia. I am sure all of us who are from that province will be hearing more, as folks activate that campaign.

It is not popular. Small business people in my riding have let me know in large numbers their problems with the HST, their fears that this is going to affect their businesses at this crucial time of economic difficulty in British Columbia. That continues. There is nothing that would change the approach to the HST in this legislation.

Recently I attended a meeting of the Burnaby Inter-Agency Council where it heard a presentation about the living wage campaign. One of the things that was pointed out was that in Burnaby the two most significant costs a family of four faces are, first, housing and, second, child care.

Government Orders

The bill and the government's approach to the economy does nothing in either of those areas. It likes to say that it is spending more money on housing than any government in recent history, but that is only because it is living off the avails of the money the NDP fought for from the last Liberal budget. The Conservatives have gone on and on about that for years, but they have taken no new significant initiatives of their own.

In terms of child care, that is the second highest outlay for a family of four in Burnaby. Yet there is nothing in the budget that will help those families.

The universal child care benefit that the Conservatives introduced, that \$100 a month, was really of very little help to families, and now they are going to supplement it by \$3.25 a week to the lowest income families. It is not very much. It is not a significant contribution toward helping families in my riding. Given the significant costs, it really is a gesture that has almost no meaning whatsoever.

We know there is nothing particular in the budget, other than the final nail in the coffin of the grab of the EI fund that will help people who are on employment insurance at this time. We know that 500,000 Canadians' employment insurance benefits are going to expire very shortly. That will be a serious problem for many communities and for all of those individuals and families.

We have been pressing for an extension of benefits. We won some extension in a larger contribution toward EI, from our work in this corner of the House, but it does not go far enough. We said that at the time, that it was important but it does not go far enough, and now we are going to face that crunch.

• (1705)

Again, the Conservatives are proposing to set up a similar scenario where individuals and businesses are going to have to pay into the EI fund so that it can be built up, and down the road it will be snatched back not to provide for better EI programs or training programs but to pay down the deficit.

We have seen that this is a jobless recovery and there is nothing in the budget bill that will help that jobless recovery. The employment numbers last Friday were not very encouraging, with an 8.2% unemployment rate and 1.51 million Canadians still out of work. The vast majority of jobs that were created were part-time jobs, which offer no decent benefits. The wages are low and they offer no economic security to families. This is not a budget that British Columbians are pleased about.

The government has also buried changes to Canada Post, which will affect the viability of Canada Post and push down wages ultimately if this goes through, which is a completely unacceptable way of dealing with this proposal. It has been around for a long time, to expedite the privatization of Canada Post, and anything that diminishes Canada Post's universal mandate to deliver international mail is a very serious problem, so—

• (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am often amazed, although I do not really know why I

am amazed anymore, when I listen to a member from the NDP talking about corporate tax cuts as if we are giving money to corporations, as my friend said, that we have to borrow money to give corporate tax cuts, when in fact all we are really doing is not taking the money that belongs to people in the first place. Of course, by allowing corporations to prosper, we are giving jobs to Canadians. It reminds me of a wise saying that a government big enough to give people everything they want is a government big enough to take everything they have.

My question for the hon. member across the way is this. Our economic action plan gave five extra weeks of benefits across the board, extra benefits for long-tenured workers, more money for training, easier access for work sharing, extra money for young people, pathways to education, extra money for aboriginal education, doing it all without downloading costs on the provinces and the municipalities. Why did my friend across the way not vote for the economic action plan?

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, it is because it did not go far enough. Those measures around EI are not going to be significant as these 500,000 people face the end of their benefit periods. Why would we be giving a break to large profitable corporations, particularly banks and oil companies?

It must cause some people some concern on the opposition benches to hear about these massive profits announced recently by the banks, at a time when Canadians need assistance and need to see jobs being created. These corporate tax cuts do not do anything to create jobs or support programs, and that is definitely money that could be used to support the needs of Canadians in very many ways.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to change the channel and talk about cultural crown corporations, and I will use the acronyms because the member knows what NFB stands for, though I am not sure about others in the House. On page 305 of the multicoloured book, it says that the Canadian Council for the Arts, CBC, NFB, Telefilm undertook strategic reviews. There are four lines in the budget about cultural institutions. Frankly, it shows how insignificant culture is to the people on the other side.

There are question marks that arise, and I would like the hon. member to comment on them because I know he has an interest in the arts and our national cultural institutions. It states:

However, reallocations were not necessary as programs delivered by these organizations are aligned with the priorities of Canadians.

In a lot of tiny communities across Canada, institutions like the CBC have made service cuts. There are parts of the Arctic and northern Canada that are not being served by any cultural institutions. What can he say about the dearth of action in the action plan on culture in this document?

Government Orders

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the Conservatives have undervalued cultural industries in Canada since they came to power. They have not appreciated them. We certainly saw that in the election campaign where the contribution of the arts and artists to the Canadian economy was incredibly undervalued, devalued and misunderstood by the government. There is no doubt that is the case.

In my riding, which is a centre of the film and TV production industry in Canada, we are very concerned about the future of that industry. In Burnaby, we have one of the most talented and creative workforces in the arts sector, in film and video. I think 60% of the Lower Mainland's film and TV production happens now in the city of Burnaby. It is a very important industry in our community.

We are very concerned, for instance, about the rise in the Canadian dollar. We know that has a direct impact, particularly on the number of American productions that are done in our city. We are very interested to see what the government will propose to ensure the viability of that industry. We have to remain competitive, and a higher dollar is one of those places where there is a very significant impact on our local film and TV industry.

It would be very nice if the government would pay close attention to the cultural industries in Canada.

• (1715)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to explain why as the member of Parliament for Yukon and critic for the Arctic I cannot support this budget.

During prorogation there were 32 expert panels held and one was on the Arctic. People came up with a number of themes as to things they were looking for to help improve their lives, such as land claim implementation, reducing the excessive poverty in the north, residential facilities for substance abuse, education, housing, and climate change adaptation. There are programs that are expiring and are not being replaced. In this budget, the throne speech and even the Prime Minister's trips to the north, these major issues have not been dealt with. The problems have not been solved. That alone is reason enough not to support the budget implementation bill, but there is more.

Scientists across the country were astounded when the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Services was closed by the government. Some have compared it and the selling off of AECL to the Conservatives' fiasco with the Avro Arrow. All sorts of world-renowned expert scientists may have to go to the United States or other places. It will also result in the closing of the PEARL Eureka site, which is one of our northernmost sites in helping northern sovereignty.

Northerners also point out that there is no assistance to repair the crumbling infrastructure, the roads, ports, et cetera. My riding is one of only 13 jurisdictions in Canada where tourism is the biggest employer as far as numbers of employees go. Therefore, the neglect of tourism hurts my riding more than anywhere else. When the Conservative government first came in, it cut the Canadian Tourism Commission which markets Canada. There are states in Australia and the United States that spend more on marketing than the entire Government of Canada spends on marketing. The government took back some funds it had available.

When Canadians from all over the country fly to Alaska, or go there on a cruise, if they rent a car and drive it to the Canadian border, the border officials will not let them cross the border with a rental car. The government has not solved that problem. All sorts of B.C. and Yukon businesses are losing tourism business. In the 2010 budget the government has again made cuts to the Canadian Tourism Commission, something like \$5 million off marketing Canada in Japan, as if it is not important to continue a full-scale effort to get Japanese tourists to Canada.

A number of members have mentioned the pension crisis in Canada. Hundreds of thousands of people need more pension protection. There was another big press conference this morning and yet the government keeps announcing meetings and says that it is going to do more consultation. The Liberals put out three concrete proposals in December. Certainly, more needs to be done.

The co-operative movement in Canada is very successful. It has asked for a development fund and there was nothing in the budget for that.

One way to make people feel threatened is to go to the heart of the most basic commodity, which is food. The government said it was going to change the food mail program, but it will not tell people how. There were some recommendations in a report which were very worrying. If we told Canadian that we were not sure how they would access their food, they would be very worried. The government said it was going to have a new program of \$45 million, bringing the total up to \$60 million this coming year. It spent \$66 million last year, so how is that an increase?

The volunteer firefighters association in my riding made a very poignant submission as to why an income tax break would be good for volunteer firefighters. Rural communities across Canada are having a difficult time with recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters and yet there was nothing about this in the budget.

A northern health transfer agreement was asked for by the northern governments. I am sure that when the Minister of Health was a minister in the north, she wanted the reinstatement of this \$150 million program. It was only extended for two years for \$60 million instead of for five years.

There was nothing significant for climate change and renewable energies. My constituents and other northern constituents are constantly asking for this. In fact, some of the programs have now been cut back.

Government Orders

●(1720)

Another huge fiasco was the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. There has been a great outcry across the country in the last few weeks that the government cut 133 institutions or programs across the country, right after the residential schools apology. There is a big hue and cry that those are not going to be continued by the government and this debate is still going on.

When it comes to search and rescue, it is embarrassing because the government goes to international meetings and says it will help, or that there should be international help in search and rescue in the Arctic, and we cannot even take care of our own. There is not a single one of our fixed wing planes or search and rescue helicopters north of 60.

Even Conservatives are aghast at the budget. This is the biggest-spending government in history. Even before the recession, we had a \$54 billion deficit with, in the time I am speaking, \$35,000 in interest. They expected a government that would not be levying all these taxes.

There is a huge increase in EI taxes of \$13 billion, which will mean over \$900 per family of two. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that will cost 200,000 jobs in Canada. There is the income trusts situation and huge taxes on seniors. There are the extra taxes that we are paying today on airplane flights, none expected by Conservatives.

I asked some of my constituents what they felt. I am not going to have time to get through all of the comments, but some of their ideas are related to the budget.

Ian Robertson wrote that the Prime Minister said that the north is a priority and made various announcements to that effect, but that actions speak louder than words. Increased sovereignty patrols and summer military exercise each year for a photo op just do not cut it. The Arctic icebreaker renewal project seems to have disappeared and we still have not made a decision on search and rescue aircraft. Land claim implementation, a big issue, is not addressed.

Paul Flaherty is frustrated about the ability to not do taxes online, that people could buy some programs and there may be some free, but they are not sure how good they are. He asks why the government, if it wants Canadians to be part of the technological world, does not give out free software so people can do their taxes online. I have heard that complaint from other Canadians as well. He said that we could also do a visionary project to extend the Internet line from Haines Junction, Yukon into Tok, Alaska, have Canadians get all that business from Alaska and get the redundancy that both Alaska and northern Canada are looking for.

Joy Carp, a businesswoman in Whitehorse, suggested incentives for businesses to grow. There are incentives for new businesses but she wants incentives for existing businesses so that after being successful for a number of years, they could expand.

James Holt from Watson Lake says that in the past, there were very big infrastructure projects, such as the Dempster Highway and the Whitehorse Dam. He would like a continuing vision for the future when it comes to roads, port facilities, hydro and even rail.

We could look at joining the Alaska Railroad, one of the most successful railways in North America, to the railway in B.C. That would be a visionary project.

I will not even paraphrase what Dave Robertson from Fireweed RV Services wrote. I will read exactly what he wrote because it is very good:

There was nothing in the budget to support seasonal workers - or those businesses that need to lay off trained workers in the off season. It costs money to train someone and then have to lay them off each year. What we need is a system that will help employers keep workers on reduced hours with the EI system topping up salaries. This would allow a worker to remain classified as 'employed' when it comes to loan applications etc - keeps trained workers on hand and in place for the next season and provides some stability for both the employee and the employer.

The government said it was going to cut back CAP sites. KwaMolas Atje wrote:

You want better educated Canadians yet...you cut back the very backbone of education by cutting back on funding free Internet in the communities.

Most of us cannot afford Internet. That must make you feel so good to act like such a bully to regular Canadians whilst the business community gets everything handed to them on a silver platter nay a gold one. You are clearing your bills on the backs of the poor.

A Canadian Tire owner asks why we would have reduced the GST when we have this huge deficit, paying almost a quarter of a million dollars a day.

Efforts by the banks and credit card companies to increase rates during the recession have not been dealt with.

I have a whole list of other things that are both positive and missing in the budget, but I see my time is finished.

●(1725)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting very patiently all day for members from the government to actually speak to this bill. I do not know what is holding them back. There are 880 pages for them to draw some inspiration from.

In the 1880s Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had a vision for this country. He wanted to build a railway to unite the country from sea to sea. Today the current government does not have a lot of vision. The only member over there who shows any kind of vision is the minister for democratic reform, a fellow member from Winnipeg, and others who have had a dream to build an east-west power grid for a number of years now.

There are nine Conservative MPs in Manitoba, including the member for Brandon—Souris, and fourteen Conservative MPs in Saskatchewan all missing in action on this file over the last few years.

I want to know, when is the government going to commit to an east-west power grid so that electricity from Manitoba can flow both east and west rather than just flowing north and south?

Government Orders

Would the member like to comment on why the government members are hiding and why they are not speaking on their own 880-page budget implementation bill?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to know why those members are hiding on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation that is affecting their constituents so dramatically.

One of my constituents asked that I talk about vision, so I will answer the member's question regarding vision.

The member mentioned the vision of the railway uniting Canada from sea to sea. To continue that vision, I talked about a railway that could go north to Alaska to join the successful Alaska Railway with the railway in B.C. Also, the backbone of a modern society is a high-speed broadband Internet across the country. That could be the vision of tomorrow. That was certainly not covered significantly. In fact cuts were suggested in that area. As the member said, the vision of connecting hydro and renewable energies is sorely lacking. These are visionary aspects of a modern society that could give Canadians back their leadership in this world. Finally, the dramatic cut in scientists certainly shows no vision at all in today's world.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the question asked by the member from the NDP. I would like to know from the member for Yukon why they do not support the ecotrust moneys that were put aside in the budget for something like the east-west power grid that the member was speaking of.

I also wonder if the member for Yukon supported the decision made by the member for Toronto Centre when he was the premier of Ontario to cancel the Conawapa power deal that would have linked Manitoba to Ontario via a transmission line. Does he support his colleague's decision made in 1990?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what the member is talking about from 1990, as I was not here and it was not affecting the Yukon.

However, with respect to environmental programs, the members opposite have been asked a lot of questions by our environment critics. I see a former environment minister from B.C. When the government is asked all sorts of questions on the environment, it throws out a couple of crumbs, things it may have initiated, but they pale in comparison to all the programs the Conservatives have cut, such as the renewable energy programs, the regulatory suggestions, the other things that were moving forward that would have cut greenhouse gases, that would have improved the environment, that would have made cleaner air. The things that were cut are monumental compared with what has been actually added by the government.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is very much opposed to Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, for a number of reasons, which my colleagues have been outlining for several days.

To briefly summarize the Bloc's complaints, this is a big C Conservative budget. It does not reflect the progressive values of the Quebec nation whatsoever. The budget is all about sparing the rich,

including the banks and big business, and making the middle class and workers pay.

The Bloc cannot support a budget like that. Every time someone on the other side of the House stands up and says that the Bloc Québécois voted against the budget, we will remember that it was a big C Conservative budget, against the middle class, against workers.

Here are some examples: the government is reducing the interest rate on corporate tax overpayments; it is creating a tax loophole for companies not registered in Canada; and it is pillaging the employment insurance fund. Pillaging is serious. It means that everyone who contributes to the fund is not paying insurance premiums, but a tax because they are working. That changes the whole meaning of the EI fund.

Here are some more examples: the government is going ahead with the privatization of Canada Post, which is questionable, to say the least; it is interfering in Quebec's jurisdictions and it is doing nothing to protect the environment and fight greenhouse gases.

As the Bloc Québécois heritage critic, one measure in the budget that concerns me in particular is the amendment of the Telecommunications Act, which is designed to enable foreign carriers that own or operate certain transmission facilities, such as satellites, to operate as telecommunications common carriers in Canada.

Members may say that cultural activities have nothing to do with satellites. But that is not true, and I will prove it.

Telecommunications and broadcasting are becoming more and more intertwined; they are almost the same thing. The fact that telecommunications and broadcasting are more and more intertwined is a threat to the cultural industry here and to all cultural activities. Let me explain.

The time when we could easily distinguish between telecommunications and broadcasting is over. Before, telecommunications referred to wireless devices and cellular phones, and broadcasting referred to radio, television, video and audiovisual. But that is no longer the case. Those were the good old days, when we dialed a number on the telephone and someone answered at the other end.

We now talk about smartphones. You can do all kinds of things, referred to as applications. You can easily find an advertisement for a telephone company in any newspaper. Bell, for example, offers 16 applications for free with the purchase of a wireless device. These applications clearly involve activities related to broadcasting. For example, you can listen to CBC Radio. I have an advertisement here in which Bell is introducing its 3G smartphone. It talks about CBC Radio, Air Canada, Facebook, CBC hockey, Maclean's magazine and Scotiabank. I found this advertisement in an English-language newspaper. It is targeted to Canadians.

Government Orders

If that same announcement were made in Quebec, it would obviously talk about Radio-Canada instead of CBC Radio. It would likely give applications for La Soirée du hockey, and would talk about caisses populaires Desjardins instead of Scotiabank, where we could get information.

This shows the difference in culture and shows that communications companies control access to content. The CRTC cannot say anything, because these are not broadcasting companies; they are telecommunications companies. And that is what needs to be fixed.

• (1730)

The worst thing the government could do would be to open telecommunications companies to foreign ownership. That would mean giving foreign owners control over our culture. Everyone knows that our culture is fragile in many ways and that we must protect it. In fact, Canada was the first country in the world to sign a treaty on cultural diversity specifically to protect culture. In other industries, there is a tendency to sign free trade agreements. This is an excellent example that shows that telecommunications and broadcasting are the same.

Let us now turn to satellites. Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, mentions only satellites and is not clear on the subject of telecommunications companies even though the throne speech announced plans to open up all telecommunications companies to foreign ownership. Bill C-9 basically talks about satellites. Do satellites have a place in the cultural sector?

I have two examples, two quotations. Alain Pineau, the National Director of the Canadian Conference of the Arts, is concerned about the repercussions on the country's cultural sovereignty of opening satellites to foreign ownership. He said:

—opening up foreign ownership and control of our telecommunications can only lead to tremendous pressures to enable a similar model in cable and broadcasting.

To illustrate, he talked about film, which is not protected. Most distributors do not distinguish the distribution rights for the Canadian market from North American rights. As a consequence, American films occupy over 98% of screen time in English Canada.

Things are not quite as bad in Quebec. Our nation's culture is strong and vibrant, and Quebecers tend to prefer Quebec films. All the same, we are forced to fight a constant and difficult battle against American movies on Quebec screens. That is what happens when there is no regulation.

Solange Drouin, director of the Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo (ADISQ), offered another example of the repercussions of foreign satellite ownership. She appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology on April 1, where she said:

In 2005, XM Radio and Sirius Radio applied to the CRTC for a pay audio programming undertaking licence. Those two companies proposed to use a foreign satellite to broadcast their products in Canada. As that was not permitted, the CRTC had to assess the possibility of using a foreign satellite to provide a programming service. The government deviated from its principle regarding the use of Canadian satellites for the purpose of that service. What happened? XM Radio and Sirius Radio unfortunately convinced the CRTC that, in view of the lack of capacity of the foreign satellite broadcasting their products in the United States, the CRTC could not set requirements on the French-language and Canadian content levels it would have wished to have. Consequently, in its decision, it granted ridiculous French-language content percentages.

A little later she says:

The ownership principle, which was frequently criticized in that decision and for which we were not heard, tells us that you really have to control the entire chain of distribution channels in order to really achieve our ends—

I quickly want to talk about the Bloc Québécois' prebudget consultations and our many expectations of this budget. None of our expectations were met. First, we asked that the \$26 million cut from artists in August 2008 be given back to them. The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages told me here in the House that he had given that money to the Olympic torch relay. Now that the relay is over, let him give that \$26 million to the artists.

We also asked for \$300 million this year: an additional \$150 million to the Canada Council for the Arts for a total of \$310 million; \$60 million for the Canada Feature Film Fund, including \$10 million for the documentary feature film fund; \$50 million for income averaging over five years for artists; \$40 million for the creation of a fund for the transition to digital; \$240 million so that Radio-Canada/CBC can go from \$32 to \$40 a person.

• (1735)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, I truly appreciate my colleague's comments.

She spoke about employment insurance and the money taken from the employment insurance fund. We cannot blame only the Conservatives. We really must blame the Liberals; we cannot forget that they were the ones who diverted this money from the employment insurance fund.

I would like to ask the member a question about the budget implementation bill, which is almost 800 pages long. Once again we see that the government has tried to include all kinds of small things, thinking that people would not notice them.

I would like to talk a little bit about environmental assessments and the fact that the government seems to want to exclude certain infrastructure projects, financed by the federal government, from environmental assessments. This goes far beyond efforts by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to simplify the environmental assessment process.

We saw this issue of environmental assessments in the last budget and it is receiving even more attention in this one.

Does the member have any comments on this subject?

• (1740)

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate all of my NDP colleague's questions regarding employment insurance.

She is quite right. This did not begin with the Conservative Party. I think the Liberal Party is the one that paved the way when it was in power.

Government Orders

Over \$50 billion has now been diverted from the employment insurance fund, by both the Liberals and the Conservatives. The Conservatives have just dealt another major blow to employment insurance by helping themselves to the \$50 billion surplus and by making it legal to steal from the EI fund.

It is also true, as the member said, that there are all kinds of pesky little things—I cannot think of a better expression—throughout this implementation bill, like last year. As members will recall, they gave extraordinary powers to the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism in last year's budget implementation bill. This seems to be part of the culture of the Conservative government, the same government that boasts about passing Bill C-2 on accountability. We have never seen a less transparent government—they are so much worse than the Liberals—as suggested by one of my colleagues, and a Liberal at that.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have the current situation of the changing nature of work, with 1.5 million people unemployed. Many people have been re-employed in part-time jobs and therefore have lost their benefits.

Does my colleague think the government should work with the provinces to ensure that the changing nature of work is dealt with so people who now working in part-time jobs or who are self-employed will be able to access pension and other benefits they will need for their future?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Madam Speaker, clearly, this government cannot be trusted to take care of workers on its own. What they are doing with the EI fund is truly appalling.

It is also true that employment is a provincial jurisdiction and the Government of Quebec takes its responsibilities in that regard very seriously.

It is also true that the Bloc Québécois wants the Government of Quebec to be given increased powers in all areas of activity, beginning with culture. This is what Quebeckers want. The Government of Quebec is asking Ottawa to transfer all powers and responsibilities regarding culture and communications, with the corresponding budgets, of course.

For the Bloc Québécois, this is merely a temporary position, since our ultimate goal is Quebec sovereignty.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are few bills that are more important to Canadians than the budget bill. The government has the responsibility to put forth a budget bill that meets the needs of our country for today and the future.

Unfortunately, the budget bill the government put forward was one that simply ebbs and flows with the political change of tides that takes place in our country. Rather than trying to think of the needs of our citizens and the future of our country, the government has merely put forth a bill that shoots very low in an effort to try to curry 42% of the voters it needs to secure a majority. This, in my view, is a highly

irresponsible act on the part of the government and violates one of its most fundamental duties to our nation.

Throughout history, we have seen that in good times the government actually spent right down to the cusp of what the budget allowed. In fact, it burned through the cushion that was put forth by former Prime Minister Paul Martin and in doing so, put our country on the cusp of a deficit situation. We all knew we were going into hard economic times and we warned the Prime Minister not to do this, but, of course, he demonstrated once again his tin ear and did not listen.

As a result of the situation, today we have a \$56 billion deficit. It is true this is not all on the shoulders of the government, but certainly that deficit would be much less if the government had acted responsibly in good times. In fact, it did not and in this we all lose.

Compounding the situation with the recession was the fact that we have lost over 500,000 full-time jobs. Today there are 1.5 million Canadians unemployed. As I said earlier, the nature of work has changed so that many people are being re-employed into the workforce but in part-time jobs or as self-employed workers, which means they have lost much of the security they had before and, indeed, many of the benefits. In fact, over 1.5 million more Canadians do not share the benefits that other Canadians have now or had in the past.

On top of this, there are a couple of factors. One is that we have a strong dollar, which is a good thing for those who shop in the United States but in other ways it is going to hurt exports.

The other thing is that we have an aging population. An aging population and the increasing costs of our medical system is the gorilla at the dinner table. We simply will not be able to prepare for our future in an adequate way, to have the economy we need or have the social programs we desire unless we get our health care costs under control, costs that will be incurred as our population ages.

Today there are four workers for every retiree. In a short 15 years that is going to change and there will be 2.5 workers for every retired person. That is a staggering change that our country has never seen before and will not see again. The fact that the government is not debating or discussing this in any sensible fashion means that it is going to cause incredible pain and hardship.

There is an increased demand for moneys to pay for social programs. That gap will simply widen and widen so that those who are least privileged in our society are the ones who will be hurt the most. This will be a direct failure on the part of the government because it knows full well that this is on the horizon. It is entirely on its shoulders to act in a leadership role, to work with the rest of us and the provinces to ensure this is dealt with. It is those who are least privileged and most vulnerable who are going to be hurt in our society. Ignoring this is absolutely criminal. Health care costs, as I said before, are extraordinary.

Government Orders

What did the government do in the budget? It touted its deficit reduction platform. What was that? In effect, it was \$17 billion in cuts over five years, along with a fantasy growth rate of about 6%. The government says we are going to grow out of this. The fact of the matter is that we are not.

Once again, the government is actually blowing smoke in the eyes of the Canadian public, giving them a line that is simply not credible at all.

The other thing it did was make cuts. What kind of cuts? It eliminated 245 positions. What it is not telling the Canadian public is that most of those positions have not been filled, were not filled, and are not going to be filled. Again, these are mystery cuts that are taking place.

• (1745)

The government, in other words, does not have a credible plan to get the books balanced once again. It should take a leaf out of what happened in the mid-90s, when then-Prime Minister Chrétien and his finance minister, Paul Martin, did get our country's books back in order. I think the Prime Minister and his finance minister should take a leaf out of that book and get our financial house back in order.

I could point to a couple of things that we absolutely must do. The government must work on health care. It must bring costs under control. In order to do that, it should take a leaf out of what is being done in the province of Quebec and indeed will be done in Ontario, and probably in British Columbia, our province. The government must allow the provinces to modernize.

Seventeen of the top 20 health care systems in the world are in Europe. They pay less and get better health outcomes. We should be asking why that is so. We should be adopting those best practices here in Canada. The feds control the overarching guidelines in terms of allowing or disallowing the provinces to modernize. The federal government must sit down with the ministers. It must use its convening power to sit down with the provincial ministers of health and say, "Look, this is our problem, this is a problem of our nation. We simply cannot allow our health care system, the difference between the demand for our health care and the supply of resources to continue to widen".

It is already widening and it continues to worsen every single year. The government must sit down with the provincial health ministers to allow the provinces to modernize and to implement solutions, including IT solutions that are necessary to streamline our system.

The other thing that we need to do is on the productivity side. Although constitutionally education falls into the realm of the provinces, there is nothing that prevents the government from convening the provincial ministers of education to work on national standards, national outcomes, so that students, regardless of where they are, will be able to receive the quality education that they deserve.

This is crucially important because other countries are doing this as well, even ones with a similar political structure, like Australia. Without our students being trained in the economic needs of the future, we will have people without jobs and jobs without people. That is what is going to happen. The only way to fix that is if the

feds work with the provinces to meet the needs of our economy with the training capabilities of our provinces.

Also, it is crucially important that we are able to project in the future to know what those niches are that we can capitalize on. One we could do is shipbuilding because there is a very interesting opportunity in our province of British Columbia to develop an integrated shipbuilding strategy that would enable us to capitalize on high-paying, high-tech jobs in the future.

The feds also need to work with the coalition of the willing in terms of the provinces. Just because one or a couple of provinces may not be willing to choose to work together, it does not mean that the feds cannot work with those who are willing to actually sit down at a table and implement the solutions we need, including the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers and the labour mobility issues, which restrict our economy. Without this, we will simply be falling further and further behind with respect to other economies.

One of the banks, and I think it was the TD Bank, did a very interesting study. It looked at 20 years from now and where would Canada's economy be in the world. Right now we have the ninth largest economy. Twenty years from now we will be back around 26th in the world. We do not need to accept that. We do not need to have that. That is not, by any stretch, a *fait accompli*.

In closing there are a couple of other things. On the pension issue, we will have fewer and fewer people who will be working, as I said, compared to the retired folk. We can be intelligent about incentivizing people to continue to work after the age of 65, perhaps by giving them a percentage of their CPP tax free. It is important that people who choose to work can work, and we should not put barriers in their way.

There are many things we could talk about here. There are many opportunities the government can actually embrace for our economy, social programs, and for the future of our nation. We want to work with the government. We compel the government and we plead with it to take this very seriously, and not to come up with budgetary measures such as this which do not serve the public well at all.

• (1750)

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member will not be supporting the budget implementation bill, although the Liberal Party conveniently leaves enough of its members away to ensure that it actually passes in the House. The member referred to the issue of health care and made the statement that we need to get health care costs under control. He alleged that our government was doing nothing along those lines. I would suggest to him that it does not matter what our government does on health care, the Liberals are only intent on politicizing the issue and playing partisan politics with it.

The member is a fairly knowledgeable individual who has raised the issue and suggested that health care costs must be brought under control. Specifically, how does he propose to do that? He has referred to models overseas that might apply. Many of those models may be out of sync with our Canada Health Act. How does he plan to get those costs under control and what kinds of models does he see fitting into our Canadian system?

Government Orders

•(1755)

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, we are asking the government, but if members would like to trade places with us we would be more than happy to take their place any day and do a better job.

On the health care side there are a couple of easy things the government could do. First, set up a centre for best practices. Second, where are those models? Let us look at Germany, France, Sweden or Norway. All four of those, and there are 17 in total, have better outcomes at a lower price. All of them have mixed systems. All of them use IT tools in a way that we do not even imagine here.

Rather than the federal government sticking its head in the sand and hiding behind the fact that constitutionally the management of health care falls under the realm of the provinces, why do the Conservatives not act like leaders, convene the provincial health ministers, work as partners, and come up with a working group on health care with senior ADMs and deputy ministers to actually roll up their sleeves and meet on an ongoing basis to implement the solutions that the provinces need?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier one of the Bloc members referred to the issue of tax havens. I know the member has travelled far and wide around the world and has opinions about a wide range of subjects. The fact of the matter is, whether the Liberals are in power or the Conservatives are in power, the governments have really been unable to do much in the way of fighting the issue of tax havens. The member probably knows that some of the best progress that has been made in recent years was the case of an employee from one of the Swiss banks who took back-up computer tapes and tax records, and sold them to the German government which then chased down the people who were hiding their money and not paying taxes.

Canada's answer has been simply to allow an amnesty, so people who think they might be caught can now just volunteer and pay their taxes. It is basically a risk-free situation. If people invest in tax havens and do not get caught, it is okay. If they do get caught, all they have to do—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. I will have to interrupt the hon. member to give the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca the opportunity to respond. He has one minute to respond.

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, I am not an expert on tax havens. I would personally advocate for the government to simplify our tax system. We desperately need that.

Briefly, on the environmental side, the public ought to know that in the budget the federal government has given powers to the environment minister to basically circumvent the type of environmental assessments that we need on large energy projects. Environmental assessments that were needed before do not have to happen and the assessments of these energy projects have been taken away from the environmental assessment board. It is absolutely extraordinary that this has happened. It has led to a lot of uncertainty and concern that projects do not have to go through the proper environmental assessments, and that change was made directly by the government in the budget.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the budget

implementation bill this year and to talk about a number of issues within it that I think are of some interest to all parliamentarians.

Our party is not supporting the bill. We have come to the conclusion that the Conservative agenda, as outlined, is not sufficient for the country, is not taking the country in the right direction, and as such, we have made our decision not to support the budget implementation bill.

There are many things within the bill that have come out to show how, once again, the Conservative government's agenda goes beyond simply budget and into a whole number of areas where we have concerns, where we do not see that it is making progress and in fact it is taking steps that we consider to be inappropriate in this day and age.

I would like to start off by talking about an area that I am familiar with in terms of the transport committee. As transport critic for the NDP, I have been raising the issue of aviation security. During the prorogation break, we had the opportunity to conduct a forum on aviation security. We brought in many different experts, joined together with the transport critic in the Liberal Party. It was a very successful effort in understanding the nature of aviation security in Canada.

What we have seen over the last number of months from the government is a rather knee-jerk reaction to aviation security. Over Christmas, because of an incident in the United States, the minister decided in a late night session to purchase the new full body scanners, technology that was tested out briefly in an airport in Kelowna this year, with mixed results. When we talk to the experts, this type of equipment seems to be rather inappropriate and seems to take the security system in a direction which will not really result in more security, but just more cost. We see this playing out with the air travellers' security charge. We will see an increase in the cost of delivery of every flight in Canada, for the travellers' security charge of between \$3 and \$9 per flight, per passenger.

Canada already spends per capita more than most developed countries on aviation security. It is \$1.5 billion over five years to provide those services, plus the additional costs that we pass on to the consumer. As well, the government has decided to cut out the professional police force that is put in place in most major airports. It has passed that cost on to the airlines as well, which will eventually be passed on to the consumer.

We see additional costs in aviation security which are not borne out by the experts in terms of the threat assessments and the actual results that come from our system. The aviation security system at most of our airports is like the Maginot Line. It looks very impressive, but it is very easy to go around it and very easy to circumnavigate the types of security that are in place. They are mechanical, very much simply to assure the travelling public that we do a good job. We need to move to a different system. We need to reassess aviation security to understand what the threat is and what the appropriate response is to this type of activity, and not simply add a cost on to the consumer.

Government Orders

● (1800)

This is something we will be moving ahead with on the transport committee if we can. We will be looking at these things. It is something I hope to work with the government on to change its direction. I do not see it as being something on which we have to act in a partisan fashion. Aviation security affects every one of us in this building, all our families and all our friends. We need to ensure that we are doing the right thing. Rather than simply add costs to the system, we need to ensure that what we do is adequate to cover the needs of aviation security.

Another item that has caused a lot of trouble in my riding is attached to the end of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. This program, successfully evaluated by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, should have gone ahead. We should have continued that program. Instead, funds were turned over to Health Canada. The ability of aboriginal people to guide their own healing following the residential school traumas and abuse was taken away.

This flies in the face of the apology that we all shared in the House of Commons, that wonderful moment when we stood together as MPs and said that we were sorry, that we wanted to do it better in the future, that we wanted to fix the problem, that we wanted to work with them to fix their problems and that we wanted them to fix their problems. That is not the direction we are taking here and that is a sad fact.

This is something the government has failed at in this budget. We should go back and reassess what is being done and really understand that the programs aboriginal people use to heal themselves and the directions they take are the most important. They are the ones we want to support.

The other item I want to touch on is the changes the government is proposing to regulatory systems of environmental assessment. In the North, they take two forms. One of them was something that was inserted into this bill. It involves changes to the federal environmental assessment, taking away certain triggers that would start a federal environmental assessment and changing the law so the minister could set the scope of federal environmental assessment.

These are really large issues for people in the North. So much of our land and resources are shared with the federal government. We are also the receiver of so many of the impacts of resource development in provinces. The impacts of interprovincial transfers of water and air on our systems are great. We cannot afford to see federal government renege on its responsibility to create environmental assessments that speak to all Canadians.

We cannot turn environmental assessment into a regional issue when it is a national issue and expect that we will get the results we want for the country in the future. We may get more convenience for provincial governments. We may get more convenience for large corporations that want to play provincial governments off each other in the development of resources.

All of those things may occur with a decline in federal environmental assessment, but it does not solve the problems of the environment. We as legislators, members of Parliament and Canadians are here to protect the environment, not allow it to be

degraded. What is happening with the federal environmental assessment in this budget implementation bill is wrong.

When it comes to territorial environmental assessment, when we talk about the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, the government has put \$11 million in there to change the act, and act that has never been fully implemented. Everyone from the McCrank report through all the boards to the people there have said that the act must be finished off. They want the land use plans in place for the people of the North. Before we judge how an act works, we must finish it and make it whole.

● (1805)

What we have now is a situation that is not whole. We have to move that forward, not find ways that we can circumvent the legislation, that we can streamline it so it does not work. We need something that is going to work for northerners.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments with regard to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the environment. In the Arctic climate change is not only an environmental issue, but also a social justice issue. Those who are most heavily impacted have had the least responsibility for it.

Climate change is real. It is happening now and the Arctic is the canary in the coal mine.

Could the hon. member discuss the climate impacts in the Arctic today and what action the government should take?

● (1810)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Madam Speaker, climate change is affecting the north in a wide variety of ways.

One of the ways that stands out today is the decline of the caribou herds, one of the major points of sustenance and cultural importance. These herds are in decline because climate change has altered the ability of breeding and has changed the landscape for vegetation. Those impacts are very difficult to deal with, but the federal government in the last six months has said that it is not concerned about that. It will leave that in the hands of northerners even though the legislation clearly puts it as the government's responsibility.

The federal government is not paying attention to an issue that it should be paying attention to under the law. If it continues to do that, perhaps the only solution is to turn it over to the people of the north so they can take care of the animals in a correct fashion.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. I was very struck by his line that we are all called here because we have an obligation to protect the environment.

I think of the situation that is happening on the James Bay coast now, all across the Nishnawbe Aski territory with the ice roads melting. We have never seen ice go out this quickly. It has had a devastating effect.

Government Orders

The most impoverished communities in Canada, the northern aboriginal communities, are facing serious shortfalls. They are living with the consequences of climate change now.

Therefore, I go back to the member's comment that we are all here to protect the environment. I would like to suggest for the member that many of us are here to protect the environment, but a certain party in the House is here to protect the interests of the Alberta oil and gas sector.

The Prime Minister himself said that his job and his party was to build a firewall to defend the tar sands.

When we look at Bill C-9, we see nothing for the environment, nothing for protecting communities that are already living with the impacts of climate change. What we see is a bill tailor made to allow the pillaging of the tar sands to continue and allowing the people who are making the most money from destroying the environment to continue making that kind of money while our poor communities in the north are suffering and paying the prices of the government's inaction.

Does the member not think it would have been fairer that we actually look at dealing with the tar sands so our poor communities on James Bay and elsewhere could at least have some protection because climate change is hitting them now?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Madam Speaker, the tar sands are an enormous environmental problem for Canada, but they also, in putting the tar sands together in a fashion that works, are a great opportunity as well for economic development.

What has happened with the tar sands is they started off as very mediocre oil development in this world and have escalated to a point where, with the price of oil, they are very profitable and everyone wants in on it. The developers have been given free licence to deal with the environment.

We need to change that now and put proper guidelines, procedures and laws in place that will protect the environment and will ensure that these tar sands, which are an enormous resource for Canada, are handled correctly. Instead the government is playing this game with our environment rather than dealing with it. That is the problem.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I am pleased to speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill. The Bloc Québécois took the preparations for this budget very seriously. We toured all over Quebec. We met with hundreds of economic players. We were very disappointed, after making suggestions to the government, that the Conservatives stuck with their habit of acting as though Quebec does not exist.

Once again, the Conservatives want to help their rich friends at the expense of the less fortunate and the workers. This bill shows the government's desire to spare the rich, including the banks and major corporations, at all costs and make the middle class and working class pay off the deficit.

The measures contained in this budget attest to this desire because corporations are not asked to contribute to raising government revenues, except for the lower interest rate to be paid by the Minister of National Revenue on tax overpayments by corporations.

The bill attests to the Conservative government's inertia with respect to the environment and the fight against greenhouse gases. Rather than attacking the sources of the problem, the government is ignoring the national and international pressure for a radical reduction in energy waste and implementation of tangible policies to promote the production of clean and renewable energy.

In addition, as a woman, I am personally outraged by the measures, particularly the lack of measures, for women in this bill. In fact, the Conservatives are denying the existence of more than half the population and the challenges they face. There is nothing for women in this bill. It is an unacceptable step backwards. And we know that women are often the poorest in our society and often head up single-parent households, which compounds their problems.

I would now like to speak about Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and isotopes. As the natural resources critic, I have serious concerns about Bill C-9, specifically part 18.

Conservatives, like the Liberals, have dragged their feet on medical isotope production. These isotopes are crucial to detecting and treating a number of serious diseases. Because the core of nuclear reactors is exposed to extremely high temperatures and radiation, NRU reactors must be rebuilt every 25 or 30 years; otherwise, they become too unstable and dangerous. Consequently, the Conservatives' failure to act forced the "temporary" closure of the Chalk River reactor in May 2009, leaving Quebec health care institutions and hospitals to their own devices and creating an unprecedented medical isotope crisis.

Quebec has been paying for the government's negligence and incompetence on this issue for nearly a year now. It will soon be a year since hospitals have had a guaranteed supply of medical isotopes. We have yet to see any money to cover the cost of what the Quebec government has had to pay to manage the crisis. Waiting lists are growing longer and doctors are becoming impatient. Quebecers want a long-term solution so that we do not put any more lives in danger unnecessarily and so that patients can get the tests and treatments they need.

There have been many calls for help from doctors. What will it take to get the government to act? The Conservatives made a commitment to have the reactor up and running by August 2009. We have seen delay after delay, and now they are saying it will be up and running at the end of July 2010, a full year after it was shut down. It remains to be seen whether there will be more delays. Forgive me if I have doubt the Conservatives' word on this.

Jean-Luc Urbain, president of the Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine, predicted that patients would experience dark days waiting to receive diagnoses and treatment.

• (1815)

It is important to remember that it is Atomic Energy of Canada Limited that owns and operates the Chalk River reactor. AECL is therefore responsible not only for producing isotopes for Canada, but for producing half the supply of medical isotopes in North America. It accounts for more than 30% of international production.

Government Orders

AECL manages the supply of isotopes, and it is no secret that the government is thinking of privatizing this crown corporation.

What is more, the government commissioned a study in February 2008 to set the corporation's long-term strategic direction. Part 18 of the budget implementation bill gives the federal government carte blanche to determine the corporation's future. We have absolutely no assurance that the federal government will keep on doing its duty and providing Quebecers and Canadians with a supply of medical isotopes.

In addition, the process is blatantly non-transparent. The government is giving itself the right to notify the House of its decision on AECL only within 15 days after it takes effect. As a result, we run the very real risk of being faced with a *fait accompli*.

Another thing that troubles me is that the budget provides \$300 million in 2010-11 to cover anticipated commercial losses and to support the activities of AECL, such as pursuing the development work on the advanced CANDU reactor, safely supplying medical isotopes and maintaining reliable and safe activity at the Chalk River laboratories.

It is curious. I wonder whether this \$300 million of taxpayers' money is literally a gift for potential buyers. I was unable to get any answers about this.

In addition to the supply of isotopes, a number of other issues remain unresolved and are cause for concern.

How much is Atomic Energy of Canada Limited worth? We have invested more than \$8 billion in it over the years. Can Quebecers and Canadians expect a return on their investment with the sale of AECL? What sort of future can workers at the Chalk River laboratories and the Montreal offices expect? What will become of the intellectual property pertaining to the CANDU reactors if the company passes into foreign hands?

These are worrisome questions that still do not have answers.

I would now like to talk about the forestry industry. Quebecers are worried. This industry is going through an unprecedented crisis in Quebec, and the bill contains no real measures to reassure Quebecers.

Even though the forestry industry is the lifeblood of the Quebec economy, the latest budget completely ignores the demands of the Bloc Québécois. It is unacceptable that the Conservative government is putting 57 times as much money into Ontario's automotive sector, when the forestry industry has to make do with scraps.

The elimination of tariffs for the machinery and goods needed to modernize and improve productivity is nothing but smoke and mirrors. The industry does not have access to loans or loan guarantees to buy the machinery. Even if tariffs are eliminated, the issue will not be resolved.

The \$25 million per year over the next four years is not nearly enough for all of the lumber and pulp and paper mills to modernize. They still need to borrow money to purchase the necessary equipment.

This budget blatantly ignores the demands of the industry. For five years, forestry companies have been calling for loans and loan guarantees, but they have not seen anything.

In conclusion, the government is following the path it set out in its 2006 economic statement, with policies geared towards Ontario and Alberta to the detriment of the pressing needs of Quebec.

We do not see any measures that meet the needs of the Quebec economy. This budget should take Quebec's interests and values into account.

For these reasons, I will certainly vote against this bill.

● (1825)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two quick questions, one relating to something the member said.

How confident is the member that the government did a gender-based analysis on the budget, on the budget implementation act, on the throne speech and on all the bills it brought forward, including all the crime bills that it cancelled for prorogation?

My second question is that first-line responders in Canada, ambulance, fire and police, are asking for a public safety interoperability centre in Canada so they can save lives and connect their communications. This is an omission in the budget but I assume the member would support my lobbying for that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Speaker, this budget ignores the specific needs of the people and of workers. I agree with my colleague that by favouring the oil companies in the west and ignoring all environmental concerns, the government is ignoring the needs of the people. A more thorough study of what is needed in the criminal sector, which unfortunately I know little about, would certainly be in order.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, every so often, the real facts must be given. I will do so in English.

[*English*]

This budget commits \$11 million per year in ongoing resources for the 67 Community Futures organizations in Quebec. In addition, this budget confirms \$19 billion in new federal stimulus under year two of Canada's economic action plan, including job-creating projects in Quebec, from \$50 million to improve the Jacques Cartier and Champlain bridges, to \$18 million to improve passenger rail service between western Labrador and northeastern Quebec.

Quebec will continue to receive increased federal support. Total transfers will hit \$19.3 billion, an increase of \$281 million from last year and \$6.8 billion more than the old Liberal government.

Why does my hon. colleague not support these benefits for Quebec?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Speaker, we are definitely voting against this budget. For Quebec, we are talking about tens of millions of dollars, but for Alberta, we are talking about billions of dollars. As far as I am concerned, I pay my taxes in all fairness based on my income. I expect a government to manage its revenues like a good parent and distribute funds fairly based on the population's needs.

I find this budget very disappointing. Even if they send us millions of dollars, if that money is poorly allocated, the problem will not be solved. We must listen to the people.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, all day the government members have been hiding from this debate. We have not seen any government speakers at all get up to defend their 880 page budget implementation bill. We see the odd one sneak in with some notes from above to ask a planted question and then they retreat.

I am looking forward to asking a government speaker, when and if they ever get up to speak on this particular bill, to justify the atrocious salaries that the bank presidents earned last year on profits of \$15.9 billion. We have bank presidents making upwards of \$10 million a year. I would like to know when the current government will come in with some guidelines that are being—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières has 30 seconds to respond or to make a comment.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Speaker, we can certainly criticize bank presidents' salaries, but the Bloc Québécois has also suggested higher tax rates for the leaders of large corporations, the managers who receive bonuses and golden parachutes for their retirement. Greater responsibility needs to be taken in that regard.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a sad anniversary. Three months ago today, Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake. Today, on April 12, three months later, we are in a situation that seems to be getting worse.

Adjournment Proceedings

The day after this disaster, we understood that the government was going to make search and rescue operations its priority. Everyone agrees on that. However, two weeks later, when that operation officially ended, I met with representatives of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to provide them, in a very orderly fashion, with information they already had. Before the earthquake, 39 Haitian families from Ottawa—Vanier had already sponsored members of their families for reunification. Since the government had announced its intention to accelerate the process, I thought it was a good idea to provide them with the documents again.

When the House resumed on March 12, I asked the government whether it planned to be as flexible as the Government of Quebec was in temporarily broadening the definition of family member, namely in terms of age. This allowed Canadian citizens of Haitian origin to sponsor and bring into the country people who are now alone, perhaps cousins or people related in some other way to them. I did not get an answer. I think the parliamentary secretary to the minister did not understand my question because there has been no response. That is why I am here today.

I would like to take this time to expand on two other subjects. First, I would like to discuss the refugees arriving from Haiti whose claims have not yet been processed. Many of them have children in Haiti. The government did not waste time bringing orphans here to be adopted by Canadian families not of Haitian origin, and we should acknowledge that it did well in that respect. But what is it doing about people in Canada as refugees whose claims have not yet been processed and who have children in Haiti? These people are not even being allowed to sponsor their own children, who are living in tents in utterly horrifying conditions.

I would like to know if the government is even thinking about these people, about helping them and relaxing the rules.

My second question is about the 140,000 Canadians of Haitian origin, some 130,000 of whom are in Quebec, I am told. Thus, the vast majority of our fellow citizens of Haitian origin are governed by a more flexible system that enables them to take action for their loved ones who are living in impossible situations in Haiti. The other 10,000 who live outside Quebec, many of them in the national capital region in Ontario, find themselves in the devastating position of having to consider moving to Quebec so they can help their family members.

When the government said that it was not prepared to be flexible, did it consider the repercussions of that position on these citizens who live in the same country but are subject to two completely different systems? One system is flexible and responsive; it prioritizes human nature and reflects a strong desire to take action. The other system cannot or will not afford a little flexibility toward the other 10,000 citizens.

Adjournment Proceedings

Has the government considered what these people are going through?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Madam Speaker, since the earthquake in Haiti this past January, our government has acted swiftly to evacuate more than 4,600 Canadian citizens and permanent residents from Haiti.

To date, over 2,200 applications for more than 3,300 people received after the earthquake are in various stages of being processed. As well, more than 3,000 people have attended information sessions held in Quebec and organized by the CIC regional office to explain the special measures to the Haitian community and others.

Priority processing has taken place based on five specific categories: first, family class sponsorships; second, spouse or common law partner in Canada class applications; third, protected persons with family members in Haiti; fourth, citizenship and citizenship certificates; and fifth, in-Canada applications for work permit or to extend temporary resident status.

We are working to get people to Canada as quickly as we possibly can.

By the end of June 2010, we expect to have finalized the vast majority of the applications submitted before the earthquake. This means that CIC would be processing in six months what would normally take two years.

For all cases where we have received both a completed sponsorship and permanent resident application since the earthquake, we aim to make a preliminary decision within four weeks of receipt. If required, interviews will be held within eight weeks from the preliminary decision and, in most cases, a final decision will be made shortly thereafter. This is because it may take some additional time to conduct the medical and background screening for some of these applicants.

We will continue to apply our common sense principles to this tragic situation. Urgent cases involving vulnerable people will continue to receive priority processing by the embassy. For example, for completed sponsorship and permanent resident applications received by April 30, we expect to have held an interview and either have made or be about to make a final decision on most of the cases by the end of July 2010.

The highest processing priority remains on the closest family members and urgent and exceptional cases. We know the importance of reuniting people with their close family members. Other members of the family class and applicants who meet the requirements of the

Quebec special measures are also being processed in a timely fashion.

Our expectation is that the vast majority of persons in our highest priority would be in receipt of the required decisions and documents to come forward to Canada by the end of July of this year.

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Madam Speaker, I still have not received an answer to the question I have been asking since March 12. Is the Government of Canada prepared to be more flexible with respect to the 10,000 Canadians of Haitian origin, some of whom have submitted family class applications that do not meet current criteria?

Is it prepared to be more flexible as the Government of Quebec has been? If it is not, is it willing to refund the thousands of dollars in application fees paid by people who do not have the means to pay given that the government never intended to accept them?

Will the government be more flexible? If not, will it reimburse the people who have paid thousands of dollars for nothing?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Madam Speaker, there is no government that has shown more flexibility in terms of working with a country that has had as vast a devastation as Haiti has.

Whether we talk about the issues that are on the table here today or whether we talk specifically about, for example, operation stork, which brought 203 adopted Haitian children to their Canadian families, we did that process, which would normally take up to a year, in very quick time. It would take up to a year to do what we did in three weeks.

We have processed over 2,200 applications for more than 3,300 people received after the earthquake, which are in various stages of being processed. By the end of June, we expect to have made a final decision on the vast majority of applications submitted before the earthquake.

We are working with Quebec to implement their special measures program, and we are working closely to reunite families as quickly as we possibly can.

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:40 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, April 12, 2010

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Pay Equity Task Force Recommendations Act

Mr. Ignatieff	1313
Bill C-471. Second reading	1313
Ms. Demers	1314
Mrs. Smith	1314
Mr. Angus	1314
Mr. Saxton	1315
Ms. Demers	1316
Ms. Mathyssen	1317
Ms. Neville	1319
Ms. Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	1320

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Jobs and Economic Growth Act

Bill C-9. Second reading	1321
Mr. Cardin	1321
Mr. Maloway	1322
Mrs. Smith	1323
Mr. Wilfert	1323
Ms. Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	1326
Mr. Angus	1326
Mr. Simms	1327
Mr. Payne	1327
Ms. Charlton	1327
Mrs. Crombie	1331
Mr. Fast	1331
Mr. Maloway	1331
Mr. Simms	1332
Ms. Demers	1332
Mr. Simms	1333
Mr. Maloway	1333
Mr. Eyking	1334
Mr. Lessard	1335
Mr. Angus	1335
Mr. Lessard	1336

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Denare Beach Winter Festival

Mr. Clarke	1337
------------------	------

Terry Fox

Mr. Russell	1337
-------------------	------

Nuclear Security

Ms. Brunelle	1337
--------------------	------

Poland

Mr. Comartin	1337
--------------------	------

National Parks and Marine Conservation Areas

Mr. Schellenberger	1338
--------------------------	------

The Holocaust

Mr. Dryden	1338
------------------	------

Alberta's Lieutenant Governor Designate

Mr. Hawn	1338
----------------	------

Aluminum Industry

Mr. Bouchard	1338
--------------------	------

Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Mr. Gourde	1338
------------------	------

Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Goodale	1339
-------------------	------

The Economy

Mr. Preston	1339
-------------------	------

Pensions

Mr. Angus	1339
-----------------	------

Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Fast	1339
----------------	------

Poland

Mr. Paillé (Hochelega)	1339
------------------------------	------

Poland

Mr. Ignatieff	1340
---------------------	------

Poland

Mr. Calkins	1340
-------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ethics

Mr. Ignatieff	1340
Mr. Baird	1340
Mr. Ignatieff	1340
Mr. Baird	1340
Mr. Ignatieff	1340
Mr. Baird	1341
Ms. Neville	1341
Mr. Baird	1341
Ms. Neville	1341
Mr. Baird	1341
Mr. Duceppe	1341
Mr. Paradis	1341
Mr. Duceppe	1341
Mr. Paradis	1341
Mrs. Freeman	1341
Mr. Paradis	1341
Mrs. Freeman	1341
Mr. Paradis	1342

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Layton	1342
Mr. Baird	1342

Ethics

Mr. Layton	1342
Mr. Baird	1342
Mr. Layton	1342

Mr. Baird	1342	Trade	
Mr. Proulx	1342	Mr. Brison	1347
Mr. Baird	1342	Mr. Van Loan	1347
Mr. Proulx	1342	Justice	
Mr. Baird	1343	Mr. Ménard	1347
Mr. Holland	1343	Mr. Nicholson	1347
Mr. Baird	1343	The Environment	
Mr. Holland	1343	Mr. Hyer	1347
Mr. Baird	1343	Mr. Warawa	1347
Democratic Reform		Arts and Culture	
Ms. Gagnon	1343	Mr. Young	1347
Mr. Paradis	1343	Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	1347
Ms. Gagnon	1343	Trade	
Mr. Paradis	1343	Mr. Brison	1347
Employment Insurance		Mr. Van Loan	1348
Mr. Lessard	1343	Taxation	
Mr. Blackburn	1343	Mr. Paillé (Hochelega)	1348
Fisheries		Mr. Baird	1348
Mr. Blais	1344	Health	
Mrs. Shea	1344	Mrs. Hughes	1348
Lobbying		Mrs. Aglukkaq	1348
Ms. Hall Findlay	1344	Points of Order	
Mr. Baird	1344	Oral Questions	
Ms. Hall Findlay	1344	Mr. Godin	1348
Mr. Baird	1344	Ms. Ambrose	1348
Government Grants		Mr. Kent	1348
Mr. Regan	1344	Death of Poland's President and Other Officials	
Mrs. Shea	1344	The Speaker	1348
Mr. Regan	1344	Business of the House	
Mrs. Shea	1344	Mr. Hill	1348
Haiti			
Mr. Weston (Saint John)	1344		
Ms. Oda	1345		
Afghanistan			
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	1345		
Mr. MacKay	1345		
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	1345		
Mr. MacKay	1345		
Mr. Bachand	1345		
Mr. MacKay	1345		
Mr. Bachand	1345		
Mr. MacKay	1345		
Mr. Rae	1346		
Mr. Kent	1346		
Mr. Rae	1346		
Mr. Kent	1346		
Fisheries			
Mr. Godin	1346		
Ms. Finley	1346		
Mr. Donnelly	1346		
Mrs. Shea	1346		
The Economy			
Mrs. Block	1346		
Mr. Baird	1346		
		ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
		Health	
		Mrs. Aglukkaq	1348
		Government Response to Petitions	
		Mr. Lukiwski	1349
		Fairness for Military Families (Employment Insurance) Act	
		Ms. Finley	1349
		Bill C-13. Introduction and first reading	1349
		(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	1349
		Petitions	
		Aboriginal Affairs	
		Mr. Bagnell	1349
		Air Passengers' Bill of Rights	
		Mr. Maloway	1349
		Earthquake in Chile	
		Mr. Maloway	1349
		Citizenship and Immigration	
		Mr. Bélanger	1349
		Foreign Takeovers	
		Mr. Angus	1349

Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement	
Mr. Siksay	1350
Foreign Takeovers	
Mr. Gravelle	1350
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lukiwski	1350
Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lukiwski	1350
Privilege	
Provision of Information to Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan	
Mr. Lee	1351
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	1355
Mr. Bagnell	1359
Mr. Lukiwski	1360
Mr. Abbott	1361

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Jobs and Economic Growth Act	
Bill C-9, Second reading	1362
Mr. Bains	1362
Mrs. Hughes	1364
Mr. Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	1364

Mr. Siksay	1364
Mr. Woodworth	1366
Mr. Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	1366
Mr. Bagnell	1367
Mr. Maloway	1368
Mr. Fletcher	1369
Mrs. Lavallée	1369
Mrs. Hughes	1370
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	1371
Mr. Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	1371
Mr. Fast	1372
Mr. Maloway	1373
Mr. Bevington	1373
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	1374
Mr. Angus	1374
Ms. Brunelle	1375
Mr. Bagnell	1376
Mr. Woodworth	1376
Mr. Maloway	1377

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Citizenship and Immigration	
Mr. Bélanger	1377
Mr. Dykstra	1378

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Additional copies may be obtained from: Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: 613-941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: 613-954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : 613-941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : 613-954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca
http://publications.gc.ca

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>