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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 13, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 13, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*English*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 39(1) of the Access to Information Act, a special report of the Information Commissioner entitled “Out of Time: 2008-2009 Report Cards and Systemic Issues Affecting Access to Information in Canada.

[*Translation*]

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

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EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CANADA

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2010-2014 Corporate Plan Summary for Export Development Canada.

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PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I have the honour to present a petition that is quite remarkable both because of its nature and because of the 62,766 signatures it contains. That may be a record in the House.

This petition calls for an extremely important measure: an increase from 15 to 50 weeks in the employment insurance benefit period for people who are seriously ill, injured or quarantined.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the woman behind this petition, Marie-Hélène Dubé, who has survived cancer three times. This courageous woman is on Parliament Hill today, along with other people from organizations that have supported her:

the Canadian Cancer Society, Coalition Priorité Cancer and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

My colleague from Joliette has already put forward a motion in the House to implement this measure. I hope that when the time comes, all my colleagues in the House of Commons will vote in favour of increasing the number of weeks of benefits for people who are on extended leave because of illness, injury or quarantine.

[*English*]

IMMIGRATION

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Madam Speaker, today is Vaisakhi, the Sikhs' new year, celebrated all around the world. It is in the spirit of this celebration that I am submitting a petition signed by more than 3,000 Canadians, demanding that the government apologize for the historic mistreatment, and denial of basic rights and necessities of life on May 23, 1914 to the British subjects of Indian origin who had arrived on Canada's shores on the *Komagata Maru*.

Sixty-three days after arriving in Canada but not allowed to disembark the ship, all 356 passengers were forced to leave Canada. Of course, this was dictated by the racist and discriminatory policies of the time.

This petition was a Canada-wide community effort, but particular thanks goes to the Professor Mohan Singh Memorial Foundation of Canada, and to Sahib Thind and Jasbir Sandhu for their work.

Let us use today's auspicious day to recognize a historical wrong. It is an opportunity for the government to issue a heartfelt and sincere apology, so that we can move on, correct the historical injustice, offer a chance for healing and reconciliation, and make sure that this never happens again.

Our party was the first to call for this apology. Let us make it happen as soon as possible.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions. The first one is regarding suicide. It says that the people who experience depression and mental illness need to be protected by the law; that youth in Canada are just as vulnerable as youth from around the world; and that predators are both encouraging and counselling suicide without penalty through the Internet.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to enable prosecution of those who endanger or encourage or counsel someone to commit suicide by updating the Criminal Code of Canada to reflect the new realities of the 21st century.

SKIN CANCER

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is regarding skin cancer. It says that one in seven Canadians will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer and one of the most rapidly increasing cancers in Canada.

The petitioners are calling for support of a national skin cancer and melanoma initiative to provide much needed access to newer drug treatments, and funding for research and educational programs.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): The last petition, Madam Speaker, is regarding human trafficking. It says that the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation should be condemned.

The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to protect the most vulnerable members of society from harm, from being victims of human trafficking. They request Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to include a minimum punishment of imprisonment for the term of five years for offences involving trafficking of persons under the age of 18.

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have another petition calling for the passage of my Bill C-343, which helps victims of crime and their loved ones by extending the employment insurance eligibility period and enabling victims' family members to take a leave of absence from work and keep their jobs indefinitely.

These signatures and all the others show that people are concerned about the fate of victims' families and want the government to act as soon as possible.

• (1010)

[English]

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I have two petitions to present to the House.

Thousands of Canadians are calling on Parliament to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights, Bill C-310, which would compensate passengers with all air carriers, including charters, anywhere that they fly in the world.

The bill provides compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and long tarmac delays. It would address other issues such as late and misplaced bags. It would require all inclusive pricing by airlines in their advertising. The airlines would have to inform the passengers of flight changes, either delays or cancellations. The new rules must be posted at the airports and the airlines must inform passengers of their rights, and the process to file for compensation.

If the airlines follow the rules it will not cost them a cent. This type of legislation has been in Europe now for five years and the question is, why should Air Canada passengers receive better treatment when they fly in Europe than when they are in Canada?

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

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

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

The earthquake in Chile occurred on February 27, 2010. It was an 8.8 magnitude earthquake in southern Chile. The Canadian Chilean community has mobilized. It has been putting on social events across the country.

It is calling on the government and wondering why it is taking so long for the Prime Minister to give the same treatment to the earthquake victims in Chile as he did for the victims of the earthquake victims in Haiti, and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the earthquake victims in Chile.

SEEDS REGULATIONS

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Madam Speaker, on behalf of a number of constituents, I present a petition related to Bill C-474, an act respecting seeds regulations. The petitioners call upon Parliament to amend seeds regulations legislation to require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition calling on the Canadian government and Parliament to formally issue an apology on the tragedy of the *Komagata Maru* as a result of the racist and discriminatory immigration policy of the government of the day.

On May 23, 1914 the ship with 376 British subjects of Indian origin arrived at Vancouver harbour. Two months later it was forced to leave and as a result the passengers were held incommunicado, denied basic necessities, and their legal rights were denied. Nineteen of the departing passengers were killed by the British government of India, many were imprisoned, and their properties expropriated. If we have a formal apology, the community would feel this historic wrong would be corrected, and would give a chance for healing, reconciliation, harmony of the community in addition to putting measures in place to prevent such incidents in the future.

Government Orders

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, if Questions Nos. 4, 24, 33, 41 and 54 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 4—**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours:**

With regard to the Community Development Trust Fund, up until November 18, 2009: (a) what amount has been allocated to each Atlantic province; (b) which projects have benefited from this funding, by province; (c) how much have these projects received, by province; and (d) in which city and constituency are these projects being carried out?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 24—**Mr. Todd Russell:**

With regard to fisheries: (a) what specific measures has the Department of Fisheries and Oceans taken to enforce inland fisheries regulations in the vicinity of Phase II and III of the Trans-Labrador Highway; and (b) what specific measures will the Department take to enforce inland fisheries regulations in the vicinity of Phase II and III of the Trans-Labrador Highway?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 33—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

Regarding the press conference held by the honourable Minister of Justice on October 20, 2009, at 11:00 a.m., at the Lord Elgin Hotel, what was the total cost breakdown?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 41—**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:**

With respect to the government's commitment to sell government assets worth \$10.1 billion over a five year period, as made in the Economic and Fiscal Statement (EFS) delivered by the Minister of Finance on November 27, 2008: (a) which departments have assets being considered for sale as of the date hereof; (b) do the dollar figures projected in Table 2.2 of the EFS represent the amounts intended to be generated net of the book value of the disposed assets; (c) what are the numbers projected from Departmental and Corporate Asset Reviews in each of the five years for which projections were made in Table 2.2 of the EFS; and (d) if the numbers then projected in Table 2.2 of the EFS are no longer consistent with current government projections for the disposition of assets, what are the government's revised projections for those dispositions of assets for the period discussed in Table 2.2 of the EFS?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 54—**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:**

With respect to contracts under \$10,000 granted by Sport Canada between January 1 and October 21, 2009, what are the: (a) vendors names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed from April 12 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. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill.

[Translation]

It is my pleasure to make a brief speech on behalf of the residents of greater Moncton, my riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, and the people of Atlantic Canada.

• (1015)

[English]

I would like to take this opportunity to speak to the budget on behalf of Atlantic Canadians. We are all in this place representing various areas of the country and I want to point out what is a glaring absence of any policy, of any care or of any words related to the hopes, the aspirations and the mere existence of Atlantic Canada.

In the budget speech we all received a document entitled, "Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth", delivered by the Minister of Finance who, like many in this House, has Maritime roots, in fact New Brunswick roots, which I know he is proud of. Nonetheless, in his speech of some 19 pages there was not one word toward Atlantic Canada, which is what we might call exhibit A.

Second, we in Atlantic Canada laud our coastal brethren in the Pacific for their initiative with respect to the Pacific Gateway and we understand that it is vital to Canada's economic growth and future. I could probably speak for all members of the Atlantic Liberal caucus when I say that we are happy there was mention of and movement toward forming and making stronger the Pacific Gateway, but there was not one mention of the term "Atlantic gateway" in the budget speech, the Speech from the Throne or the budget documentation.

Government Orders

We have a right arm and a left arm. We have a ying and a yang. In this place, we represent a country with three coasts. Economically, we have a Pacific coast but we also have an Atlantic coast and that coast deserves and is acting on a provincial level toward the crystallization of an Atlantic gateway, both port-wise and inland. No one need take my word for it. There are various provincial governments of all political stripes. We have a whole rainbow of colours of governments in Atlantic Canada now. We have a provincial NDP government, a provincial Conservative government and provincial Liberal governments. It is not partisan when I say that there is good work being done by all provincial governments on the Atlantic gateway and yet the federal government appears not to want to mention anything of it in its recalibration document. In fact, there is no real effort toward sustaining or helping the Atlantic lobster fishery which is in crisis.

I want to take a few moments to speak to other entry point aspects. Moncton is an area that is clearly inland and it is the hub of the Maritimes. It is a transportation centre. For a long time, after being one of the first airports to be transferred to a private authority in Canada, has been at the cutting edge of having small or mid-sized community transportation issues made important. The Greater Moncton International Airport handles over 500,000 passengers a year. It puts itself into the same category, with the same aspirations, hopes and struggles, as places like Abbotsford, Charlottetown, Mont Tremblant, Fredericton, Saint John and Kelowna, the airports that are not, frankly, Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal.

There are challenges presented to those points of entry, which is why, in the budget document beginning at page 299, there is the strange term called "strategic review savings". To many people, this might go unnoticed, but we need to be clear that those are cuts to budgets. If they were cuts to budgets of Air Force One and the PMO's plane, maybe we would not have a big problem, but they are cuts to things like CATSA, the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority. Those are the fine men and women who, until I suppose a month ago or so, were not very well-known until a certain visit by a former cabinet minister to Charlottetown. However, they are the people who administer security in our airports. They perform a very vital function in flowing traffic for commerce and ensuring security, which needs to be top of mind for all of us.

• (1020)

In the 2011-12 budget, \$12 million will be cut to the services, followed by a further \$15 million in 2012-13. The government gives lip service to the notion of airport security. When the focus should be on ensuring security personnel in our airports, the only safety measure the government is able to employ is body scanners and there is no indication that the body scanners will be deployed in mid-sized airports. It is of crucial importance to people, like I say, in Abbotsford, Charlottetown and Moncton to ensure the flow of passengers continues.

The presence of body scanners suffices for the government while it cuts personnel. How will that help on the issue of security and with respect to the flow of goods and persons on a commercial level? For many of the airports in Atlantic Canada, it will be crippling. Frankly, the government is abdicating its responsibility in this regard to protect Canadians. We can forget about commerce, Atlantic Canada

gateways and the importance of emerging economies, the real point is that there is an offloading of the costs of security to the citizens.

While the government talks about tax decreases and easing the burden for Canadians, what is happening through this budget instrument is that the Conservative government, in claiming to prioritize security in Canada, is hiking airport security fees to the passengers while simultaneously reducing the budget by some \$12 million to \$15 million for CATSA, the agency providing security. In the end, the Canadian traveller will pay.

Canadians already pay up to \$17 in security taxes per flight and the government is proposing to raise it on some flights by over \$8. It may not sound like a lot but for some people travelling across this country it may be the difference between some people choosing to stay home, to not travel through an airport or not to use the Moncton airport, for instance, especially if there is one scanner employed for over 500,000 passengers. We do not know what the future holds but there is certainly no emphasis on small and medium-sized cities and their airports in this budget and, as I mentioned, not a word about the issue of the Atlantic gateway.

The government claims to care about Canadian security but it is cutting funding to CATSA and expecting taxpayers, Canadian citizens, to cover the shortfall. It is another instance of a hidden tax. It is another incidence of untruthfulness in a budget document. It does not even provide sufficient funding for airport security in terms of personnel and there will be cuts of people employed at Canada's airports.

Another issue with respect to security, an issue of importance to the Greater Moncton International Airport and other airports, is the work of the Canada Border Services Agency. The disregard for the security and safety of Canadians citizens shown in this budget has been furthered by the fact that the CBSA cuts, which total \$6.5 million in this year and \$54 million in 2011-12, show a complete disregard for the need for service at our airports and ports. How will CBSA deal with the budget cuts?

I want to know where the champions of Atlantic Canada are. Where are the Allan J. MacEachens? Where are the Don Jamiesons? Where are the Roméo LeBlancs? They are not in the House or in the government. They are not on the government side because Atlantic Canadians have been told, along the lines of a famous 1997 speech given by the prime minister, that Atlantic Canadians should come to the House and mind their spots. They should just mind their place, follow the rules and be quiet about their aspirations.

Government Orders

It is no longer time for Atlantic Canadians to accept the ignorance of the government toward their dreams and aspirations. It is no longer time for them to be quiet about the future of Atlantic Canada. It also is not time for the Government of Canada to omit the words “Atlantic Canadians” from a budget document. We will not stand for it and I urge all members of the House to take that to the government during the budget debate.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have spent many a summer in my colleague's riding and it is certainly one of the most beautiful ridings in this country and it has great lobster.

He made some comments about there being an absence of policy in this budget and several times said that there was no mention of Atlantic Canada but I believe the policies of this budget affect the entire country.

I would like the member to comment on some statistics that have been put out that indicate that Canada has the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7, that Canada's decline in the real GDP was virtually the smallest of all G7 countries, that Canadian labour markets have fared much better than the U.S. where job losses are proportionately three times larger than Canada, and that Canadian domestic demand growth has rebounded more strongly than all other G7 countries since the beginning of 2009 and led Canada out of the recession in mid-2009. Other statistics tell us that Canada has weathered this recession much better than any other country on this planet, and we should be proud of that.

Whether the member is correct or not, I would like him to comment as to whether or not these policies affect the entire country, which includes Atlantic Canada.

• (1025)

Mr. Brian Murphy: Madam Speaker, the hon. member was doing so well up to beaches and lobster.

He is correct that the fundamentals of the economy, which were put in place by a good friend of many of us on this side, Paul Martin, and the resistance of a former government to things like bank mergers, which most people on the other side agreed with at the time, are largely responsible for the fact that we did not do as badly as some other economies.

The point is, and I will use an aeronautical analogy, had someone been doing something else other than just being on auto pilot, like those members were, we might have avoided racking up such a huge deficit. To turn the argument over on my friend, a huge deficit does affect everybody in Canada and probably will affect the regions more.

When we get down to budget deficit slaying, the people of Atlantic Canada know they will be the ones to suffer. They know that budget deficits need to be dealt with and ACOA and the other shoes that may drop, Marine Atlantic, who knows, these will be the first things that the Conservative government will look at because it cares not for Atlantic Canada.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, for many years Canadian workers and small business owners have jointly contributed into the employment insurance fund. However, instead of receiving some of these insurance funds when

unemployed, many workers, whether they are from Moncton or Toronto, end up not qualifying as a result of the former Liberal government changing and tightening the EI rules.

This budget empties the employment insurance account of roughly a \$57 billion surplus, which is money that was paid by workers and built up throughout the years. It is grossly unfair.

The hon. member is a member of the Liberal Party. How could his party possibly agree to a budget that ripped \$57 billion out of the hands of unemployed workers?

Mr. Brian Murphy: Madam Speaker, EI is a pressing issue for all of those who need access to it, whether it is in Toronto, Moncton or elsewhere.

We on this side prefer to take a calibrated approach to EI reform. My colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour leads the charge with respect to improvements to the EI program, which so far have been completely ignored by the government. There are people in need and people who need access to EI. There are people who need a longer term of EI.

The way to look at this subject, rather than just being outside the palace all of the time throwing snowballs, is to try to get into the palace and change the way we deal with EI, which is what we on this side are doing. We are coming up with constructive arguments toward sustainable, sensitive EI reform that will help all Canadian workers, whether in Atlantic Canada or elsewhere.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak against Bill C-9, which would bring into legislation a number of measures already announced in different ways and means motions or previous budget documents. It also spells out a number of measures originally presented as part of the most recent Speech from the Throne.

As the New Democrat consumer protection critic, I will devote the majority of my time to discussing the provisions contained within Bill C-9 that relate to the credit and debit industry. However before my analysis of the credit and debit sector provisions, I would first like to address two measures contained in Bill C-9 that are extremely concerning. The first is environmental assessments, and the second is the employment insurance fund.

With regard to environmental assessments, and in keeping with our party's concerns about the oil sands, the measures contained within Bill C-9 are very worrisome. If passed, Bill C-9 would exempt certain federally funded infrastructure projects from environmental assessments, going well beyond efforts by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to streamline the environmental assessment process.

Bill C-9 also would allow the minister of the environment to dictate the scope of environmental assessments. It would also weaken public participation and enable the removal of assessment of energy projects from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to the National Energy Board and Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

Government Orders

Eighteen months ago, the Conservatives came out with their now infamous economic and fiscal update. Within this update, they gutted the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which had been in place for 100 years, and the Liberals supported them. Now the Conservatives are trying to finish what they started by doing away with environmental assessments for most projects that receive federal funding. Several provinces have rather weak legislation and no way to conduct real inspections and assessments. The Navigable Waters Protection Act was the only way some provinces could have an assessment done.

The second measure I would like to address, before going into my analysis of the credit and debit provisions, is the measure introduced regarding employment insurance. If passed, Bill C-9 would empty the employment insurance account, which held a surplus of roughly \$57 billion, money paid by workers and businesses, built up over years of Liberal and Conservative rule. First the Liberals took the \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund and transferred it to the government's general revenue fund, and now the Conservatives will finish off the job they admonished the Liberals for.

There is a fundamental difference between the employment insurance fund and the government's consolidated revenue fund. All Canadian companies and their employees have contributed to the employment insurance fund. If a company recorded a loss, it did not matter. It still had to contribute to the employment insurance fund. Only a company with enough profits to pay tax was required to fork over corporate taxes into the general revenue fund.

In other words, the same companies, primarily the forestry and manufacturing industries, which suffered greatly because of the high dollar, for example, that had not turned a profit and that did not have to pay tax, could not benefit from the \$60 billion in tax cuts given to the most profitable companies, and yet each and every one of these companies paid for every single one of their employees and every employee contributed to the EI fund.

The manufacturing and forestry companies that were already suffering believed their contributions would be used for a very specific, precise and dedicated purpose. This means that those who paid, who suffered because of the high dollar, supported the rich, particularly those in the oil industry in western Canada.

Now I will move on to discuss the measures relating to the credit and debit industry in Canada. I would like to share with the House the opinions of various stakeholders in the credit and debit industry on the government's latest measures released in the budget.

The Credit Union Central of Canada appreciates the overall intent of the draft code as stated in its purpose. However, and that is a big however, it believes that the draft code should give additional consideration to protecting the interests of Canadian consumers, to ensure they are provided with transparency, flexibility and the opportunity to make an informed choice when using debit and credit services, and of course to preserve a competitive, balanced market that includes a strong Canadian-focused payments delivery channel, as provided by Interac.

• (1030)

The Credit Union Central of Canada continues by stating that the most significant concern of Canadian credit unions regarding the

draft code is the combined potential of provisions 5 and 6. They negatively impact the future of Interac debit services and the viability of Interac itself. They believe that providing merchants with the ability to set priority routing for debit services will exacerbate the concerns put forward by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and that aggressive marketing practices and the dominant market positions of Visa and MasterCard may cause debit card processing fees to skyrocket and may ultimately lead to the end of Interac.

The CUCC believes that provisions 5 and 6, as currently written, will make it easier for Interac to be overwhelmed by targeted pricing strategies of the much larger international payment card networks. Provision 5 reads:

Merchants will be allowed to provide discounts for different methods of payment (e.g. cash, debit card, credit card). Merchants will also be allowed to provide differential discounts among different brands.

Depending on how this provision is interpreted and applied by merchants, consumers may find that it becomes hard to tell the difference between discounting and surcharging, particularly if there is no requirement for the discount to reflect or relate to the merchant's cost for the transaction or payment card network.

Provision 6 reads:

Merchants can decide whether they will accept multiple forms of debit card payment. In such a case, merchants can choose the lowest-cost option on transactions involving co-badged debit cards.

The draft code states:

When a consumer uses a co-badged debit card with a merchant who accepts both debit products on the card, the merchant will decide which debit payment option is used for the transaction.

By unintentionally facilitating a significant threat to the future viability of Interac, these provisions may ultimately hasten a reduction in competition and choice of debit services available to Canadian merchants, consumers and card issuers.

Canada's payment card industry is one of the most successful and stable models in the world, due in no small part to the unique role of Interac and its national infrastructure for the provision of debit card services. Interac has become a valuable national utility that Canadians trust and depend on to provide universal, cost-effective debit services and is uniquely positioned to design and deliver services suited to the Canadian markets and in the interests of Canadians.

Government Orders

The principle of protecting the public and consumer interest should be primary and should be reflected in the rules of conduct and operation for all parties involved in providing debit and credit services, including the payment card networks, card issuers, acquirers and merchants. We believe the draft code, as written, places consumers at a disadvantage. It does not acknowledge the consumer as an equal participant and party to debit and credit card transactions, and several of the code's provisions either do not adequately protect consumer interests or protect the interests of merchants at the expense of the consumer.

Option consommateurs, a not-for-profit association dedicated to the defence and promotion of consumers' rights, is also concerned about the adoption of the code of conduct for the debit and credit card industry. According to Option consommateurs, if adopted as is, the voluntary code would give more power to merchants, to the detriment of consumers.

It also argues that whenever consumers make a purchase, they must be able to freely and transparently choose their preferred payment method from among those offered by merchants. However, the voluntary code allows merchants to require the payment method of their choice.

Furthermore, the government should prohibit surcharging on the payment method in order to make it easier for consumers to compare prices.

In closing, the measures contained within Bill C-9, mainly the gutting of our employment insurance fund, the removal of environmental checks on government infrastructure projects and the implementation of a flawed code of conduct that would negatively impact consumers, are just some but definitely not all of the reasons why our party cannot support this budget.

• (1035)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it was reprehensible behaviour that the credit card companies raised the rates for individuals during the recession, the time Canadians needed it least. They also raised the fees for companies. I got all sorts of complaints from small businesses.

The chartered banks, which I have a great respect for and am a big supporter of, also unfortunately raised the rates for businesses and individuals for their loans. I commend the government for providing liquidity to the banks, but they did not pass it on.

I assume that, because the member deals with this topic, he got from a lot of his businesses this questionnaire from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business about the fairness and oversight needed in the credit and debit industry. I got a lot of them. I agree with him that the budget is not sufficient to deal with this. I wonder if he would like to comment further on that.

• (1040)

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, I too have many small businesses in the riding of Sudbury, and they have been coming to me with their concerns about both Visa and MasterCard entering the debit market.

We had a voluntary code of conduct that was presented in November, and of course prorogation stopped the process in which we were supposed to have a discussion when that voluntary code of

conduct assessment ended. When the toothpaste is out of the tube, we cannot stuff it back in.

Many small business owners are concerned about priority routing. Many of them are concerned about how this will impact consumers' choice. That is, if consumers come into their place of business, whether they will be able to even use their cards and whether the businesses will be able to take their cards.

Consumers are very concerned about the interest rates that we have seen on the credit side as well. When they go in there, they want to use their card, but now they are starting to hesitate because of the interest rates.

On that side, we also see small businesses having interchange fees increasing. In some cases they have a negotiated rate of 1.6%, but when we start getting all of these new cards in place, the premium cards that the companies are putting out, those negotiated rates go out the door and they end up paying about 2.6%, sometimes even 3%, on the interchange fees.

More needs to be done. We need to have an honest discussion and debate about this, because more needs to be done to help consumers

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his presentation, and he is absolutely correct when it comes to the whole issue of the credit cards and the fees.

The government constantly acts against the interests of consumers. Whether it is in the air passenger bill of rights issue, where it sided solidly with the industry, with the airlines, or in this case. Not only is the government acting against the interests of consumers, but it is actually acting against the interests of small business.

We have seen, as the member for Yukon has experienced, letters from small businesses, and I have seen some figures that are just astounding as to how much credit card costs have been assumed by businesses over the last year or two. It has doubled and tripled for a lot of small businesses.

Now the Conservatives are basically adopting their laissez faire attitude to the very people, the small businesses, that they purported to represent all these years. It is a big joke that they would suggest that they will come up with voluntary guidelines and somehow these business-oriented credit card companies will somehow take it easy on the consumers. It is absolutely nonsense, and I would like to ask the member to comment further on that point.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question and commend him on the work he did on the airline passenger bill of rights.

Government Orders

There are so many things we need to implement in this budget to actually help consumers and small businesses, but let us look specifically at small businesses and how they are being affected by these credit card companies and the big banks. The interchange fees they are paying are costing them thousands upon thousands of dollars every year. What is that doing? That is stopping them from hiring another person, from expanding their business, from growing their business. That money is then going to the credit card companies who are making billions and billions of dollars in profits.

We need to implement a code of conduct now, not a voluntary code of conduct. That lacks teeth. If it is voluntary and we choose not to do it, what is stopping people from actually implementing it? We need the code of conduct now. It should not read in the budget, "only if necessary". It is necessary now. Ask any small business in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, today I will be debating Bill C-9.

The Bloc Québécois is against this bill, and I will explain why. I will also talk about what has been excluded from this budget.

First of all, my colleague from Hochelaga did a tour of all the ridings, including mine. During his visit, he met with various organizations: an organization representing women, another representing non-profit groups, farmers, employment insurance recipients, as well as experts on social housing and homelessness.

It was noted that the budget does not offer anything to women, who represent about 52% of the population. As women, they are responsible for the family. A number of single mothers must find housing on minimum wage or with minimal government assistance. These women need social housing assistance. Since no money is being invested in social housing to help these women, we are seeing increasing poverty.

It was clear that the gap between the rich and the poor will widen even more because of this Conservative budget. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

It is also clear that the majority of caregivers are women. Our employment insurance system allows them only eight weeks of special leave, which is not much. These women who decide to stay at home to help their family will lose their jobs or quit them temporarily. But being a caregiver does not come with a contract. No one can know whether the person being cared for will pass away within six weeks. It is impossible to know.

Furthermore, the court challenges program was very important to women, who cannot afford to pay lawyers \$1,000 an hour to defend a job.

That is why we are against this budget, particularly because of its impact on women.

This budget is also silent on the subject of moneys owing. The government owes Quebec \$2.2 billion for harmonizing its tax with the GST. Considering Quebec's latest budget, which is a controversial attempt to deal with some financial difficulties, I sincerely believe that if the government were to truly take its responsibilities and stop scorning the Quebec nation, it would transfer that \$2.2

billion to the province. That money would pay for the social programs that Quebec has chosen to implement, such as \$7-a-day daycare for single mothers who want to go back to work or return to their studies. That costs money. It provides direct assistance to women.

In general, women who have part-time jobs are eligible for employment insurance. If a person who earns \$9 per hour three days a week gets 55% of her salary, she will be living below the poverty line. I have much more to say on the subject of women, but I will move on to other matters.

Our seniors are our library. These are the people who built our society, who educated us and who raised us. These people have been forgotten. I am talking about the guaranteed income supplement.

I meet women who are living off their old age pension, which is \$500 per month. How is anyone supposed to pay for housing, food, clothing, electricity and medication on less than \$7,000 per year?

Not helping these people spend their retirement years and the last years of their lives in dignity suggests a truly narrow vision. It is unacceptable. Stranger still is the fact that when these people owe the government money for taxes, it does not take long for the government to collect. However, when it comes to helping vulnerable people, most of whom are women, the government just forgets. Apparently, it is a little more complicated to help these people than it is to collect money from them.

Just as unacceptable is the discrepancy between what this government promised when it was in opposition and what it is doing now that it is in power. That is what we call selective memory.

• (1045)

They talk about voting for power. I have power from my electors, the power to defend their values and needs in the House, be it in terms of agriculture or otherwise.

We asked for just over \$625 million for the agri-flex program. The government gave nothing. They are simply holding consultations, but meanwhile nothing is being fixed. While they are travelling around Canada visiting farms, nothing is being fixed.

It is the role of government, which the public trusts, to fix what is broken. If the Conservatives are not able to fix what is broken, they can just stand aside and let us have our own country. We will fix our problems without always having to be at the mercy of a centralizing government that does not share our values. It is not that our values are better or worse, they are simply different.

The government could have found other ways to get money. In 2008, when we came back after the election, the Minister of Finance said that Canada had no problems. I do not know what colour his glasses were, but all of a sudden everything changed. This is the same minister who was once Ontario's finance minister. Things did not go well at the provincial level either. I wonder if it is mere coincidence that this happened twice or is it just a lack of knowledge?

Government Orders

The Bloc is doing a thorough job. It visits its electors every week, every month and every year in order to find out what they need. It would have been easy enough to get money from tax havens, which are worth \$3 billion. That amount would help many young families with limited means.

Also, Quebec's equalization payments should be restored. We pay 25% of the bill and the \$3 billion would have been a tremendous help to Quebec. In addition, there is the \$2 billion for the GST, and Hydro-Québec's \$400 million still locked in the federal government's coffers. This money has not been returned to Quebec. All these items add up to \$6, \$7 or \$8 billion. It is as though this money was owed. It is not an amount owing, it is a right. This money belongs to Quebec and must be returned to Quebec.

There is also the matter of Quebec's responsibilities, in health, for example. The population is aging. Money is being transferred in small doses, and is not flowing very quickly into the population. For that reason, we must make intelligent investments and the money we send to Ottawa must be returned. This is taxpayers' money, money from people in my riding. They are experiencing difficulties or are going bankrupt because the money is not being returned. They have to feed their families and pay their bills.

This bill will mainly help banks and the oil sands industry by providing tax credits to oil companies and all the rest. I find that unfair.

Quebec has chosen to provide social programs such as a child care program, among others. That is the choice that we have made and we cover the cost.

Government expenditures must be cut. The government says that it cut 245 positions, phantom jobs that were already empty. They are abolishing 245 jobs, but creating 300 others to manage other things. I may not be a mathematician, but I do know how to do the math. When you get rid of five people and then hire 300, that makes an additional 295 hires.

There is also a great deal of duplication. There are officials at the Quebec ministry of health and officials at the federal health department. This is something that should be looked at in order to better manage public funds.

I will leave some time for members to ask questions, which I welcome. The Bloc Québécois is opposed to this bill and I am proud of that because it is not a good bill.

● (1050)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about women's issues. I would ask her if she has confidence that the government did an analysis of the budget implementation bill and the throne speech so that they correctly reflect gender support.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Madam Speaker, the answer is clearly "no". The government seems to have a 1940s mentality, from a time when women were valued only for their cooking and cleaning. This is the 21st century. We have women entrepreneurs and business leaders, and others who take care of their families and all kinds of

things. This is a very backwards-thinking government when it comes to women. Whether the government likes it or not, women are active in politics and we will practice politics as women.

● (1055)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that the member spoke about the tax havens. She made reference to \$3 billion. I am not sure where that figure comes from, but I would be very interested in finding out. I would like to be able to question one of the government members on the bill, but we have not heard one speak for the last couple of days. I am not able to ask them, so I will have to ask the Bloc member.

In terms of tax havens the whole issue became public a couple of years ago when an employee of one of the Swiss banks sold some of the bank's computer back-up tapes containing the names of all of the former nationals to the German government. The Canadian government and other governments became aware of citizens using these tax havens. As a result, Canada offers an amnesty. A lot of people in Canada were nervous and started voluntarily paying their taxes. To me, this just promotes tax havens as a risk-free venture because people know they can invest in tax havens and as soon as they start to feel the heat on them, they can voluntarily declare their taxes and get away with it. The question is when is the government going to step in and take tougher action?

Under the bill, if I could ask one of the government members, they do talk about applying provisions of the Criminal Code to serious crimes related to money laundering and terrorist financing to tax evasion. I am wondering if there is a connection between that measure and what we are talking about in terms of tax havens.

Could the member give us a little more background about the \$3 billion?

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Canada's five biggest banks released a financial report on the use of tax havens, which allowed them to save \$2.4 billion. That is just the banks, to say nothing of the oil companies. Tax havens shelter 79 subsidiaries, thereby cheating Canada out of \$2.4 billion in tax revenues.

Wikipedia lists the countries that are tax havens and anyone can access that site. If someone wants to invest money, they should consult that site. It indicates where to invest, even in the United States.

It is easy for people to shirk their fiscal responsibilities when countries allow it and accept it. Furthermore, the government, whether Liberal or Conservative—not progressive, but regressive—sees no problem with investing our financial capital there, since people are still making money in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Hochelaga has only one minute.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is too bad that I have only one minute to speak.

Government Orders

I visited my colleague's riding this week. The member spoke at length about seniors and the people who are our living memory. These people are left out. In addition, high speed Internet access is absent from this budget.

My colleague is from a very beautiful riding, the second most beautiful riding in Canada, and I wonder if she can tell me how Internet access could have benefited her constituents, particularly seniors.

Ms. France Bonsant: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is right.

This government wants to close Canada Post outlets, which mostly serve rural areas where Internet service is not accessible.

How can we help people isolated in rural areas when they do not have access to either mail or the Internet?

Money is available, but it comes with little and Conservative Party pictures and logos. Maybe there is a shortage of photographers or pictures. Money is often announced, but it does not go anywhere.

[*English*]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak briefly to Bill C-9, the budget bill, and what this means to most Canadians.

My constituents of Don Valley East are concerned, as in general this budget has very little positive impact on the average Canadian. Instead they feel the budget is providing businesses greater profits on the backs of average hard-working Canadians. For example, the budget does not provide any real relief for the unemployed or any hope for those who are in imminent danger of losing their employment.

Currently 1.5 million Canadians have lost their jobs and more will lose their jobs due to the inaction of the government. Young people are especially vulnerable. The current unemployment rate for youths is 16%, the highest it has ever been. The government needs to develop a strategy to get these Canadians back to work. It is very simple. If people work, they can spend and with that spending, they can enhance the economy.

The one thing the government has boasted about is the stimulus plan, the economic action plan. I would like to do a reality check on the action plan. So far the stimulus plan of the government has only created photo opportunities for ministers, a feel-good advertising campaign, which is all talk and no show, and false promises of jobs.

The question being asked by many Canadians is this. Where are the jobs that the government claims it is creating, the full-time well-paying jobs? A reality check, after the first year of the stimulus plan, is there are very few full-time well-paying jobs for Canadians.

The minister responsible for infrastructure and his officials are unable to verify either how much of the stimulus money has been spent or the numbers of jobs that have actually been created. How could they? They do not track the job numbers. The question my constituents are asking is this. Where are the thousands of jobs that the government is claiming it has created?

We understand the government spent about \$250 million on advertising. How much did it spend on job creation? It was \$9.4 million. If one does the math, the proportion is 1:25, \$1 on job

creation, \$25 on advertising. That does not create jobs. The government needs to be more strategic in job creation and needs to spend less on advertising.

To add insult to injury, we have learned that more than \$1 billion of this stimulus plan in the last budget did not even leave the federal coffers. How can that be possible? By not spending the money, the government can claim it managed the deficit. Talk about manipulating the public. How can Canadians trust it?

The government also lacks an economic antenna and fiscal credibility. Just last October, the Prime Minister claimed there was no recession, no economic crisis. The Prime Minister claimed that he would never create a deficit. It just goes to show that the Conservatives have never balanced a budget. The last time they did it was during the time of Prime Minister Borden, which was when the *Titanic* sank.

What are some suggestions that the government can do? It could extend the home renovation tax credit, with a new emphasis on energy efficiency and retrofit and build affordable housing for Canadians across the land. These are really the social determinants of the health of Canadians.

The government could invest in eco-energy retrofits and research and development to create value-added jobs. Canada has the technology and the know-how, but it needs a government to provide a conducive environment, not a government that cannot think beyond ideology, like it did with the Avro.

The government has a reverse-Midas touch. It kills everything that is good and progressive for Canadians, like the popular eco-energy retrofit program.

It is also a well-known fact that the most effective economic multipliers that provide stimulus are infrastructure. For every dollar that is invested, \$1.60 comes back. In housing, the yield is \$1.50 per \$1 investment. Investing in the unemployed gives back \$1.60.

• (1100)

Instead of doing the logical thing, what does the government do? It brings in a payroll tax. Increasing EI premiums, which is a payroll tax, kills jobs and is not an efficient way for the government to collect revenues. Canadians cannot figure out how the government can be so economically obtuse. A payroll tax of \$13 billion to small and medium-sized enterprises is not an incentive for businesses to create jobs.

Officials from finance tell us that a percentage change in GDP equals approximately \$16 billion and that its impact on job creation is around 0.6%. This means that \$16 billion would create 96,000 jobs. However, the government's investment is only one-quarter of that, so how can it claim it is creating thousands of jobs? This is a plain falsehood.

Government Orders

One of the biggest losers of the stimulus program has been the women. They have not benefited from the stimulus package. Women have only seen a small part of the action in the Conservative government's economic action plan.

As the federal government rolled out the budget, a new study by Queen's University Professor Kathleen Lahey argued that men were seeing a disproportionate share of the benefits of Ottawa's record spending over the past years. Professor Lahey says that the top question for the government this week should be what budget 2010 will do to ensure that women receive a fair share of the benefits of these costly initiatives. Women have only seen a small part of the action in the Conservative government's economic action plan.

The study notes that of the \$9.4 billion spent to date on stimulus, only \$572,475, that is, 0.00006%, has gone to upgrade women's shelters, when nearly triple that amount has been committed to upgrading three animal shelters in Canada. While the care of animals is something very close to my heart, I believe the care of abused women should take precedence.

As I mentioned previously, the government has decided to massively increase EI premiums in 2011 for both the employees and employers. This impacts women and youth who are trying to seek employment or getting back into the workforce. How imposing a payroll tax helps stimulate the economy boggles one's mind.

The government also has proven itself to be an incompetent fiscal manager. In 2006 it inherited a \$13.2 billion surplus, which carried over to the following year to about \$9 billion. Today we find ourselves with a \$56 billion deficit. When we add that up, it works out to over \$70 billion in three and a half years that we have lost. That is shameful. If the government can claim it is an economic manager, I shudder to think what it would do next.

• (1105)

The government is putting a burden on every Canadian adult and child to the tune of \$3,000, a burden on some who have not even started walking, let alone working.

What does the government have to show for this massive mismanagement of finance? There is nothing for seniors, women or the unemployed. There is no social housing, nothing for the homeless, older workers or informal caregivers.

What about the environment? Yesterday we learned that Alberta was facing a huge shortage of water. Why? Because of the lack of rain and snow. Climate change is a science that the Conservative government still refuses to accept.

What about R and D? The government let the space agency funds lapse and got rid of the government's leading scientists.

The budget does nothing for most Canadians. It is truly unfair to those who are most vulnerable and who care about the environment or the future. It affects the public service and programs of Canadians. The budget reinforces my belief that Conservatives are not here for average Canadians. They are only here for their ideological friends.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Madam Speaker, buried in the budget implementation bill is a clause that would provide exemptions on any federally-funded infrastructure projects from an environmental assessment.

The federal Toronto Port Authority wants to construct a tunnel crossing a portion of Lake Ontario, linking Toronto to the island airport, thus enabling the airport to increase its air traffic dramatically. This proposed tunnel is extremely controversial and expensive, and Torontonians will be shut out of the consultations because there will not be a federal environmental assessment on the impact the tunnel will have on the water and air quality if this budget bill passes.

Furthermore, this environmental assessment exemption would allow for uncontrolled and dramatic expansion of the polluting tar sands projects without environmental assessments.

Not only will the budget implementation bill degrade the air quality of the Toronto waterfront, it will also increase greenhouse gas emissions, causing more climate change and global warming.

Given those terrible consequences of the budget implementation bill, how could the hon. member and her party allow this bill to get through the House of Commons?

• (1110)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, I remind the hon. member that Kyoto, which would have helped with the environmental assessment and reduce pollution, was defeated by her party after it got into bed with the Conservatives. I can only answer questions which come from people who are really committed to the environment. If she and her party were really committed to the environment, they would never have let Kyoto die.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have weighed the hon. member's question against the response that was given, and I would say that two wrongs do not make a right.

Let us just say that what is done is done. The hon. member voted against the budget when it was brought down, unlike other members in her party. I wonder why she was unable to convince the people in her party with all the arguments she has made, and that the Bloc Québécois and our colleagues in the NDP have made. Why is she unable to convince the members of her party to stand up together?

[*English*]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, the issue is credibility. The Conservative Party did not have credibility on the environment. The Conservatives never had credibility. They did not believe in the science of climate change.

My question for the hon. member is this. Why did his party join hands with the NDP and defeat the Kyoto protocol? Where is its conviction? One cannot have conviction if one starts playing games.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I count myself lucky that I was not in the chamber for most of the member's speech because the parts I did hear were quite fanciful and full of nonsense.

Government Orders

With respect to the economy, the member obviously knows that we paid down close to 40 billion dollars' worth of Canada's national debt in advance of the recession.

An hon. member: And now it's going back up again.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I recall the members opposite complaining that we should have actually spent it. She also will know—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I should have warned the hon. member there is only 30 seconds left. I will have to give the hon. member for Don Valley East the opportunity to respond or make a comment.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the members of the NDP opposite supported that, but I should also point out that we did provide over \$1.5 billion to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for natural heritage projects. We have a chemical management plan. We are the first government to bring in hard targets with respect to greenhouse gas emissions.

I wonder why the member does not support those type of initiatives when under the Liberals' watch greenhouse gases—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Don Valley East has 30 seconds to respond.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Madam Speaker, I just want to ensure that the member opposite does not use fanciful and nonsensical language when it comes to economics. It was the Mulroney government that created the largest deficit. The Conservatives have never balanced the budget. We balanced the budget. We left a \$13.2 billion surplus and the Conservatives have not managed it properly.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill.

An implementation bill often contains fine print. As the saying goes, the devil is in the details. The government often tries to slip in certain measures in implementation bills that it did not announce in the budget. These measures end up in the overall bill, as do all the technicalities and all the details on implementing the budget. Everything must be read very carefully because often the government tries to pull a fast one, as is the case in this bill.

Fortunately, this poses no problem to the Bloc Québécois since it was already against the budget, which in no way meets the needs of Quebec in a context of economic crisis and the crisis in the forestry and manufacturing sectors. Obviously we will be voting against the budget implementation bill.

I have discovered that the budget says nothing at all about the restriction on Canada Post's exclusive privilege that the implementation bill would introduce. Once that measure is implemented, it will allow exporters of letters to collect letters in Canada and transport and deliver them abroad. That means that Canada Post's competitors will be able to collect mail in Canada and Quebec and then ship it outside Canada.

The people in the Canadian Union of Postal Workers have been publicly calling on the government for a long time to preserve jobs in this sector. Instead of listening to them, the government has proposed a measure that will end Canada Post's exclusive privilege.

On June 17, 2009, the Conservative government introduced Bill C-44 to eliminate international mail from Canada Post's exclusive privilege. The bill, which made it to second reading, died on the order paper because the House was prorogued. It died, like all other government bills.

So they decided to short-circuit the democratic process. They put that measure in the budget implementation bill. That shows the insidious nature of the Conservative government and its real intention to completely deregulate this crown corporation.

The people in our various ridings, particularly in rural regions, are continually lobbying for the survival of postal services as we know them today. This is not a matter of closing your eyes and thinking there should be no change in the services. But we know how governments work. I say governments because the Liberals did the same thing in their time. They were closing post offices in the regions left and right, saying they weren't profitable. But we have the evidence that Canada Post is actually very profitable.

We have to accept that the services we receive in the regions must be paid for and that they may be less profitable than other services, but they do make it possible for a community to survive and keep its services. It is the same thing for schools and financial institutions. When those establishments close down, one after another, the regions lose their vitality and their population declines. These are services the public is entitled to. We pay for these services and governments use sleight of hand to reduce those services.

The Bloc Québécois is firmly opposed to privatizing Canada Post, even partially. This crown corporation must continue to be a public agency and maintain universal services with uniform rates throughout Quebec and Canada. When these services are eliminated, all rural regions suffer the same fate.

The change to the Employment Insurance Act is also not in the actual budget but in the implementation bill. The Bloc Québécois has been calling for substantial improvements in the employment insurance system.

A few examples of this would be to administer the system on the assumption that applicants are acting in good faith; increase the program's wage replacement rate to 60% of maximum insurable earnings; eliminate the much-discussed waiting period; standardize the qualification requirements for benefits at 360 hours of work; calculate benefits on the basis of the 12 best weeks of insurable earnings; expand the right of recipients to continue receiving benefits while receiving training; and make self-employed workers eligible for regular benefits.

Government Orders

More generally, we believe that the government should submit a plan for reimbursing the funds diverted to its own accounts from the employment insurance fund. It should also drop its obvious intention to loot this fund once again; the fund does not belong to the government.

We are very concerned about certain provisions in the implementation bill. The Conservatives' 2008 budget established a new crown corporation, the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board, reporting to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. This board's duties included administering a separate bank account. Any annual surpluses in the employment insurance fund were supposed to be retained and invested until needed to cover the costs of the program.

Budget 2010 closes the board's separate bank account, the EI account, and creates a new one, the employment insurance operating account.

They are permanently eliminating the accumulated surpluses in the EI account, effective retroactively to January 1, 2009. This account will therefore no longer exist and will be replaced by the employment insurance operating account, which will start from zero. The EI surpluses, amounting to more than \$57 billion on March 31, 2009, according to the Public Accounts of Canada, will disappear for good.

We very much regret the fact that there is no mention of the reforms needed to make employment insurance more accessible. That is a real problem. Most people who contribute to employment insurance do not necessarily qualify for it.

My colleague from Compton—Stanstead spoke about the situation of women, who are especially affected. They are the least able to access employment insurance. It is nearly as bad for young people. People contribute to EI but are not entitled to the fruits of their labour, that is to say, benefits. When someone loses his or her job and has paid into the system, that person should have benefits for a little time before finding another job. Unfortunately, though, some people cannot even get employment insurance benefits.

Furthermore, lifting the freeze on premium rates will not improve the system. The government will not hesitate to pilfer \$19 billion from the employment insurance fund between 2011 and 2015.

When the Conservatives were the official opposition, they, like the other opposition parties, publicly criticized the pillaging of the employment insurance fund by the Liberals who were in power at the time. Former Prime Minister Paul Martin, when he was finance minister, was mandated by Jean Chrétien to get Canada's finances in order. He did two things: he pilfered from the EI fund and cut transfers to provinces.

The Conservatives were highly critical of these measures. They took power a few years later, and are now pilfering \$19 billion from the EI fund themselves. For that reason alone, we must vote against the budget implementation bill.

Between 2011-12 and 2014-15, the government has estimated the surplus at \$19.2 billion. With the 2010 budget, the government will be able to pocket these surpluses.

In order to generate these surpluses, the government plans on increasing premium rates by 15¢ a year, as of 2011, as permitted under the act. However, I must note that the increase will be suggested by the EI Financing Board, which we find very worrisome.

I will talk about other changes we found in the implementation bill, such as an amendment to the Banking Act, which will enable credit unions to incorporate as banks

• (1120)

I have just mentioned some aspects of the implementation bill that show that this government has tried to slip in some completely unacceptable measures. The people of Quebec are calling on us to vote against this bill.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I apologize, but I am going to ask a question that is not related to the member's speech. If he does not want to answer it or cannot, he can finish the last minute of his speech that he wanted to do.

My understanding is the Canadian Space Agency is upset that the PolarSat satellite program did not get funding in the budget. It would provide satellite coverage of the entire Arctic, of the entire north of Canada. It could measure the permafrost which is melting and having devastating effects on the north. It could provide Internet coverage to all northerners.

I wonder if the member would support the funding of that satellite project.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Yukon is speaking of a very specific issue which probably affects his region more. I must say that we had asked for many measures which cannot be found in this budget. It is probable that during the consultations he conducted, the RADARSAT issue was very important for the people in his riding. So I hope that he voted against the budget and will vote against the implementation bill. I also hope that he will persuade his Liberal colleagues to be present insufficient numbers and all in their seats to vote against this budget that does not contain the many measures the public has asked for.

My colleague from Hochelaga conducted an exhaustive tour of Quebec. He made a stop in my riding. Like the hon. member for Yukon, we were in fact told by many people that there should have been certain measures in the budget. Unfortunately, however, they are not there. In particular the support program for older workers, for which people have been asking for a long time, was missing. We want this program restored. We had lengthy discussions on this subject in my riding when my colleague from Hochelaga made his visit, and unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that this was not a priority for the Conservative government.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the member dealt with the post office remailer issue in his speech. I remember the Liberal post office critic getting up yesterday and explaining very well what is going on. The Conservatives introduced Bill C-14 and a similar bill last year, Bill C-44. When they could not get the bill through this minority Parliament, they managed to stick it into an 880-page budget implementation bill. It is a totally sneaky and dishonest way of dealing with the issue.

I was even more surprised when my colleague from Hamilton Mountain stood up and reminded the House that it was, in fact, a Liberal member three or four years ago who introduced this very same bill. I am pleased to see that the Liberals have changed their position and are now back on the right track on this issue. They are opposing this whole business of trying to dismantle Canada Post and the remailer issue. I applaud them for getting back on track. I was not aware until yesterday that it was the Liberals who had initiated this whole effort two or three years ago.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bellavance: Madam Speaker, the hon. member was not exactly asking a question, but I will be happy to remind him of something. Even if he says that the Liberals seem to have changed their position and are opposing the implementation bill, which includes a restriction on the exclusive international remaining privilege of the Canada Post Corporation, we should not applaud them too loudly.

As I said to the previous member, the Liberals' tactic, for both the budget and the implementation bill, will be to count—even though they have had difficulty this session in counting all their votes correctly—sufficient absent members so that the budget and implementation bill are passed.

So my colleague in the NDP is right to be concerned about this situation. With the complicity of the Liberals, the implementation bill will be passed, and this measure to the detriment of the post office and our postal workers will be introduced. We can be sure we will hear about this in all of our regions. The people are very concerned about this.

• (1130)

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today and give thanks to the proud, hard-working people of Etobicoke North.

I left a job I loved to run for elected office because I believed, and still believe today, that it is the job of government to make life better for Canadians and to have a plan, a real plan, to build for a better tomorrow.

Where is the help now for Canadian families in the budget? The budget comes up short and often offers mere gimmicks; for example, superficial tax changes to the universal child benefit that do not benefit low income and single parents.

Almost 20% of my riding is engaged in manufacturing, the second highest percentage for the entire country. About 25% of the families in my riding are headed by single parents who regularly work two

jobs just to put food on the table for their children. As a result, I have served as the vice-chair for our Toronto breakfast programs. Sadly, we feed 100,000 students every morning in the city. That means one in four of our students go to school hungry, and hungry children cannot learn.

My riding has the highest rates of type 2 diabetes in children in Ontario. Children develop diabetes because it is the choice between a \$5 litre of orange juice versus a \$2 double litre of orange pop. The choice is clear for parents trying to stretch each dollar.

We will offer a real alternative, a better offer to Canadians: quality early childhood care and education. Canadian researchers calculated a two to one economic and social return for every dollar invested in child care. American researchers demonstrate a three or four to one return for low income families, and show that childhood development programs could have a substantial payoff for governments, improve labour skills, reduce poverty and improve global competitiveness.

Where is the help now for our seniors in the budget? A mere \$10 million to encourage volunteerism and a day of recognition is a far cry from concrete help to fix pensions.

Where is the investment in our aging population? We have a federal government that has hardly uttered the word "health" for the last four years. Yet, worldwide there is concern that the baby boomers are retiring and entering their high demand period for health care. In Canada there will be 7.5 million people over the age of 65 by 2025. Population aging has tremendous implications for Canada, where most elderly people would not be able to meet more than a small fraction of the cost of the health care they incur. The average hospital stay in Canada costs \$7,000 and does not take into account emergency or cardiac care.

Where is the investment in prevention? Worldwide the leading global risks for fatality are high blood pressure, responsible for 13% of deaths globally; tobacco use, 9%; high blood glucose, 6%; physical inactivity, 6%; overweight and obesity, 5%. These risks are responsible for raising the risk of chronic diseases such as cancers, diabetes and heart disease. Reducing exposure to the aforementioned risk factors, along with reduced alcohol use, cholesterol, and high fruit and vegetable intake would increase global life expectancy by an astounding five years.

Illnesses associated with aging such as cardiovascular disease and cancer cost \$20 billion and \$13 billion respectively. Moreover, the impacts of brain and psychological diseases are greater than cancer and cardiovascular disease combined.

Today, someone in Canada develops dementia every five minutes. This will change to one new case every two minutes in 30 years. In 30 years the prevalence of dementia in Canada will more than double, with the costs increasing tenfold if no changes are made. This means the total cost associated with this mind-robbing disease could reach \$153 billion by 2038, up from the \$15 billion a year today.

Government Orders

•(1135)

The Alzheimer's Society of Canada suggests four key ways to slow the growth in cases of Alzheimer's and dementia: promote healthier lifestyles including encouraging people over age 65 to increase their physical activity levels; add system navigators to guide families through the complex health care system; invest in support and education for caregivers; and combine risk reduction strategies to delay the onset of dementia by two years, particularly through the discovery of new treatments.

If we could merely slow the onset of dementia by two years for each affected Canadian, we would see a return on investment of 15,000% over a 30 year research effort. One of the biggest challenges we face, therefore, is how to best prevent and postpone disease and to maintain the health, independence and mobility of an aging population.

As someone who taught at a business school, I understand that we must slay our country's biggest deficit in history of \$56 billion, but that we cannot do it by destroying what makes us Canada and in some cases, uniquely Canadian. We must dream of the future we want, whether it is the future of health care or the future of the earth's climate.

Incidentally, where was the investment in climate change and clean energy jobs in the budget? A mere \$25 million does not cut it when the government spent almost none of its green infrastructure fund last year. It does not cut it when President Obama invested \$50 billion for green jobs, the United Kingdom invested \$1.5 billion, Germany invested \$13.8 billion, and China invested \$221 billion, or 110 times that of the U.K.

For a second year in a row the government is using the budget bill to weaken federal environmental laws. These amendments have nothing to do with implementing the budget and are a direct attack on Parliament.

Parliamentary review of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is required to get under way by June 2010. The parliamentary standing committee is planning to start this review in May. Why not present these amendments to the committee as part of the review process and let members of Parliament determine if these amendments are necessary?

One last issue to cover today. I have always loved to listen to our vets and today I am honoured to serve Royal Canadian Legion Branch 286 in my riding. The most important lesson I ever learned from our veterans, while growing up, was that they went to war for my mom's generation, for my generation, and for those to come. They did not go for their own and 100,000 never came home.

I have never forgotten what one vet said to me, namely, "What will you and your friends do for the next generations? We are entrusting you with the future we fought for".

We have to negotiate for our children who are not here. We have to accept moral responsibility. With every tough decision it is important to ask, is this something my children would be proud of? This is not a budget that looks ahead at the challenges of our times. It is hard to see how it will make Canada more competitive, more prosperous, or better prepared to create jobs or protect pensions.

We must start building for the future. We face tough decisions including our growing deficit, the future of our health care system, our warming climate, all of which will have an impact on future generations.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to compliment the member on her speech. It was certainly a speech I would have expected from any one of my 37 colleagues in the NDP. She is right on in her analysis.

She talked about health issues, disease prevention, high blood pressure, smoking, and other lifestyle issues in which the government should be actively involved. I am sad to say that the previous Liberal governments that had been in power for many years should have been more active on this file as well, but that does not excuse the lack of action from the Conservatives at this point.

The fact of the matter is that there are countries, such as England, which pay the doctors based on the doctors getting their patients to live a better lifestyle. In other words, the doctors are paid to get patients to quit smoking as opposed to approaching health on the basis of treating people after they are already sick.

We have been talking about this probably for 25 years. It is certainly a major issue for the NDP. It is a constant battle to get government to act, to do the right thing and take preemptive action. As the member pointed out, if we were to do that, we would actually save money in the long run. People would be healthier and would live longer as a result.

•(1140)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his comments about health prevention, which is key. There are opportunities to reduce costs. A recent OECD study looked at costs in 10 countries and there was tremendous variation. If we could reduce the cost to the best practices, we could reduce health care costs by 10% to 48%.

There are other opportunities for reducing health care costs, including prevention, early detection and mammograms. We know disease treatment costs less when we diagnose it early. We need to reduce blockages anywhere in the health care system. In particular, there are blockages between acute care and chronic care.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, I also listened to what our colleague had to say, and like my NDP colleague, I feel that she had some very good ideas that reflect the views of veterans in her riding who asked her what we are doing in the House of Commons to promote this sort of idea. At least that is how I interpret what she said.

I know that we cannot identify the people who vote for or against a motion or who are absent. But what will it take for her and her colleagues to defeat this budget, which they condemn, and send these people back to the drawing board?

Government Orders

What more does my colleague need to get all her colleagues to vote against this budget?

[*English*]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member was talking about veterans. Veterans in my community have asked for more of a focus on brain health. The brain is the most vital organ in the human body. If it does not work properly, every aspect of life may be compromised.

One in three, or 10 million, Canadians will be affected by a neurologic or psychiatric disease, disorder or injury at some point in his or her life. Parkinson's disease affects almost 200,000 Canadians. This is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month. There is a common link among neurological diseases such as ALS, MS, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, and that is there are no cures or effective treatments that consistently slow or stop their course. It comes back to prevention. We have to build a better understanding of what these diseases are and how they impact society and invest in research in order to have better treatments.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation act. I would like to spend my time talking about some of the things that are in the bill but also about some of the things that are not in the bill and things that should be discussed.

I certainly appreciate the comments of my colleague across the way and thank her very much for those comments.

Let me talk about a couple of things that are in the budget that will create hardships not just for people in Thunder Bay—Rainy River in northwestern Ontario, but right across northern Ontario and other regions across the country. There is the increase of 50% in security fees in the airline tax. That is one of those hidden things that people will be hit with. There is the HST on financial services. We have talked about some of the problems with that before. Another is employment insurance.

Employment insurance is of particular interest to our party, to me and to our member from New Brunswick who is the critic in that area. The budget implementation bill empties the employment insurance account which held a surplus of roughly \$57 billion. That was money paid by workers and employers which had built up over many years. The bill empties that account once and for all.

People talk about the budget being a budget that says nothing. There are a number of things in it that we need to be aware of.

There is very little said about pensions. I suspect that the Minister of Finance who is now going across the country will be getting an earful about pensions. We know where pensions need to go in this country. We are really in the dark ages as far as pensions are concerned. The NDP has a plan and we put it forward. The Minister of Finance is aware of what we are talking about regarding reforming the pension system.

I will make a quick plug for Bill C-501 which will be coming up for debate next month. It is a bill that moves workers' pensions from unsecured into secured status. It is a very simple, straightforward bill. I am hoping that everyone in the House will support it, including my colleagues from Saskatchewan and other places whom we try to co-operate with as much as possible. I am sure we will find

some common ground on Bill C-501 and will be able to push it through very quickly to protect workers.

Imagine a country where workers and employers who paid into pension funds actually get the money back in the case of bankruptcy. That is what the bill would do. I certainly hope that members will support it.

I do not want to be completely negative when I talk about the budget. The budget extends the mineral exploration tax credit for another year, which is good. I am glad that the government has done that. The government is at least taking a couple of steps forward to fight contraband cigarettes with a new stamping regime which is a good thing. The budget also enacts certain payments to some charities, for example the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, the Rick Hansen Foundation and others. That is also a good thing.

Let me move from examining the propaganda in the budget speech to the nuts and bolts of Bill C-9. We see that the Conservative government continues to sell out our long-term interest for questionable short-term gains.

I was not surprised to see many items in Bill C-9, the HST payment to McGuinty's Liberals for example, a freeze on MPs' salaries and office budgets and huge corporate tax cuts. These were all expected.

Buried deep in the 904 pages of legal jargon that is Bill C-9 there are also provisions that eliminate the need for environmental assessments for stimulus projects, enable the sale of crown assets like Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, and increase the export tariff penalty for Canadian forestry producers.

Given that we are blessed with a beautiful and relatively pristine natural environment in northwestern Ontario, I am very concerned that environmental assessments will no longer need to be completed before infrastructure stimulus projects get under way.

● (1145)

While the Canadian economy is in desperate need of public investment, northwestern Ontario is in desperate need of new roads and highways right through the region. I would rather have a month or two delay on these projects so as to ensure that they comply with existing environmental regulations and do not have negative long-term effects on our natural environment, which many families in our region depend upon for their economic well-being.

Just as it does not make sense to cancel environmental assessments in the name of short-term economic stimulus, it also makes little sense to sell off profitable crown corporations and crown assets when we are facing many years of large fiscal deficits.

Government Orders

In the case of AECL, Bill C-9 lays the groundwork for the selling off of particular assets or of the company as a whole, even though the company is one of the world's largest producers of nuclear technology and brings in millions of dollars each year through the sale and licensing of its cutting-edge technology. Would it not make more sense to halt the \$100 million ad campaign the Conservatives are using to promote their budget? Imagine \$100 million being spent on ads to promote themselves; the Conservatives are using that to promote their budget supposedly.

How about reducing the \$60 billion in corporate tax cuts before selling off a proven long-term money maker? The answer is obvious but the government has never shown an ability to look beyond the next poll when it comes to its decision making.

Perhaps the most troubling detail contained in the fine print of Bill C-9 is the acceptance and enforcement of the London Court of International Arbitration ruling that Canadian forest companies owe \$68 million to their U.S. counterparts, \$68.26 million to be exact, due to an unintentional violation of the softwood lumber agreement. In fact, the unintentional violation is the government's fault. To comply with this ruling, the Conservative government included a provision in Bill C-9 that increases the export tariff on softwood lumber products from Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan by 10% immediately.

When one subtracts the paltry \$25 million in new forest sector investment that is also contained in the budget, Canada's forestry sector will actually be forced to pay out \$43 million in new taxes and tariffs this year just as it begins to emerge from a catastrophic decade-long downturn. It makes no sense. At the very least, since the tribunal has already ruled, the government should be on the hook, not forest companies that are struggling to manage and are just starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

It is a horrible situation in Bill C-9, eliminating the need for environmental assessments on infrastructure projects and selling off profitable assets while running massive long-term deficits.

I talked about AECL. Also contained in Bill C-9 is the beginning, the thin edge of the wedge, in starting to dismantle Canada Post. Think of all the fine public sector workers who have good jobs, work hard, are paid well and have pensions at the end of their time. There is nothing wrong with people working hard, getting paid well, raising their families and having a little pension when they get to the end of their working lives. There is nothing wrong with that, but the government is making it more and more difficult for people in Canada to do that.

Surely Bill C-9 will go down as one of the most shortsighted and misguided budget documents ever before the House of Commons. Should the Liberals and Conservatives band together to pass this bill, as they did with the HST, then both parties must share the blame for the substantial damage that it is likely to cause to the long-term economic and environmental interests in our region.

• (1150)

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's presentation on the budget.

One initiative that has cost our country a few billion dollars is the long gun registry. In terms of looking at the full picture with respect

to our budget, we would continue to become more effective and more efficient in our administration and budget spending.

I know the hon. member supports getting rid of the long gun registry, but in committee the NDP members are dragging it out. Would the hon. member be able to persuade his colleagues to come onside and improve the financial position of the country with the dissolution of the long gun registry and get rid of that ineffective spending?

• (1155)

Mr. John Rafferty: Madam Speaker, as the member knows, I am not part of that committee and not privy to things that are said in camera. I am not really sure what is going on there.

However, I remind the member that one of the reasons we are in the House is to listen to our constituents and to represent them to the best of our ability. I continue to do that as do all members of the NDP.

Sometimes things are very clear in terms of how our constituents would like us to vote, or in terms of things that we would like to speak on, like my pension bill, Bill C-501. My constituents would like to see that bill go through for the benefit of all Canadians.

I would like to think we are all here for that reason.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague from Thunder Bay—Rainy River for his concern about the economy of northern Ontario. I have stated the case for my area of that wonderful part of the country.

Back in the sixties, 1,200 people mined ore and shipped it to Sault Ste. Marie and 12,000 people turned it into steel. That steel was then sent across the country where thousands of people made it into different things. Those things were sold to Canadians and we traded the leftovers. We had an interconnected economic system back then that saw everybody doing well. All our communities were prospering and supporting each other.

My colleague talked about the forest industry. Could he tell us a bit about how the forest industry worked back in the sixties and seventies and how we might get back to that kind of self-sufficiency again?

Mr. John Rafferty: Madam Speaker, the forest industry, like most resource-based industries, has always been a cyclical industry. There have been ups and downs. Sometimes they have been extended ups and sometimes they have been extended downs. Perhaps it is going through an extended down right now.

Government Orders

Back in the sixties and seventies people realized that communities were important. Everyone worked for the betterment of the community and for the families in that region. As the global financial situation changed, through no fault of anybody in northern Ontario, those things changed. One thing that will not change in the forestry industry is the fact that there will always be a need for paper and paper products.

We need to ensure when there is reorganization over the next five years, or however long it takes, that northern Ontario continues to be a major player in the forest industry.

The hon. member across the way is very interested in poverty issues and so on. Those are important issues. Let me reiterate that northern Ontario and other forestry regions across Canada are suffering from high unemployment rates. We were hoping there would be something in this budget for that, but there was not.

• (1200)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this government bill. One could have a number of bones to pick with the bill, but I will focus on three.

The first is the extraordinary slowness with which the government has sent out the money, thereby having a very limited impact on jobs, as confirmed recently by the government's ideological soulmate, the Fraser Institute. The second is the lack of direct action on jobs. The third is the fact that without admitting it, the Conservatives are imposing tax hikes in a number of areas, notably a tax on jobs by raising employment insurance premiums.

While we believe these are bad aspects of the bill, we do not think they are so egregiously bad as to warrant a general election at this time. As we have said a number of times, the Liberal Party will vote against the bill, but not in sufficient numbers to provoke an election.

Let me begin on the subject of the slowness of the stimulus money. We have been saying for many months that the government should have pursued a gas tax type mechanism, which would have allowed it to quickly transfer funds to municipalities. They then would have been able to quickly get shovels in the ground and create jobs months ago when the recession was at its deepest. The government refused to do that.

We have seen evidence over many weeks and months that a small fraction of the money had gone out the door. More recent, the Fraser Institute confirmed this by saying that the government stimulus spending had little effect on jobs.

Some may know that the Fraser Institute is an arch right-wing institute, an ideological soulmate of the government. Yet the Prime Minister attacked this report with great ferocity. There are two separate points worth making in this regard.

First, as the Prime Minister himself said, fiscal stimulus was the right thing to do in the middle of the greatest recession the world has seen since the 1930s. In this respect, the Prime Minister has moved away from his traditional soulmate and joined the rest of the world in recognizing that at this time John Maynard Keynes had made a remark about return from the dead and that his kind of policy was the

order of the day. In that sense, I, my party and the Prime Minister are on the same page.

The second point is it is the inefficiency with which the government carried out these Keynesian policies, which is what we are now criticizing. As the Fraser Institute study noted, the fact is very little money had gone out and very little impact on the economy in 2009 came from the government's stimulus, and not because stimulus is a bad thing, but because the government managed it ineffectively.

The worst part of the recession, hopefully, unless something gets worse, was in 2009. That was the time when the job stimulus was most needed and because of the ineffective way in which the government managed it, very little help was provided in 2009 for those desperately needing work.

The second aspect is that partly because of this ineffective action, there is still a jobs crisis in the country. Yes, the GDP has shown improvement, but what really counts for many Canadians is jobs. The unemployment rate remains at 8.2% and the recent performance for permanent jobs has been poor.

Before the budget, we had proposed to the government that it adopt a number of policies to directly promote jobs. We proposed a policy to directly help manufacturing and forestry jobs through the accelerated capital cost allowance. We proposed tax incentives to directly help youth jobs because youth face an unemployment rate twice the national average. We had also proposed a policy to help the jobs of the future in the high tech sector. These proposals were at a reasonable fiscal cost.

• (1205)

Indeed, we identified wasteful spending by the Conservative government in areas like partisan advertising. Had it cut that wasteful spending in addition to following to our job proposals, the net impact would have been to reduce the deficit.

The government would have none of it. It adopted none of our job proposals. At the same time, the government carried on with its partisan advertising spending. That had a second negative and unfortunate impact on Canadian jobs.

My third and final point is the Conservative government continues to claim that it is not raising taxes, but over and over again in place after place we find out it is indeed raising taxes.

[*Translation*]

I am not talking just about employment insurance premiums, but about a number of other charges as well. The Conservatives will raise Canadians' taxes with this bill, but they claim they are not raising taxes.

Government Orders

[English]

It is not just a question of whether tax increases are a good thing or a bad thing. It is also a question of honesty, transparency and clarity with the Canadian people when the government is proposing significant tax hikes in a number of areas while denying it is raising taxes at all.

The first and most significant of these is huge increases in employment insurance premiums, starting next year, to the point where by year four those premiums will be up by \$6 billion per year. The additional revenues arising from the EI premium hikes will amount to \$6 billion a year, which happens to be about the same effect as if the Conservatives were to hike the GST by one point. That would also bring in \$6 billion per year.

I might note that this same issue of job-killing EI premium tax hikes is at the heart of the U.K. election campaign as we speak. The counterparts of the Canadian Conservatives, the British Conservatives, are objecting to the job-killing employment insurance premium hikes announced for the United Kingdom.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has estimated that these job-killing EI premium hikes will kill no less than 200,000 jobs in our country. Given the fact that we are facing a continuing crisis in jobs, this is surely a misguided policy at this time.

It is not as if the government is content to only raise taxes in the form of EI premiums. It is also raising taxes on airport security and on research. Post-doctoral research fellows who previously enjoyed a tax exemption will now have to pay tax. It is even putting taxes on toupees. The government seems to be taxing here, there and everywhere. There are new taxes on jobs, health, research and travel, while at the same time it is claiming there are no new taxes.

For these and many other reasons, the Liberal Party will oppose the bill. We oppose it because it has been ineffective and extraordinarily slow in terms of fiscal stimulus. We oppose it because it does little or nothing directly to create or save jobs. We oppose it because of the job-killing EI premium tax hikes and tax hikes in other areas, while at the same time the government pretends it is not raising taxes at all.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member always does a thoughtful and thorough job when he speaks.

The member's colleague who spoke earlier this morning spoke passionately about Atlantic Canada and some of the challenges it faces. I live in a region of the country, northern Ontario, where we are experiencing some really serious challenges as well. If we do not have something done soon, there are communities that will no longer be viable in that wonderful neck of the woods because of an approach that has been taken over a number of years now.

In light of the collapse of the financial system last year, we have a chance to take another look at that. We used to be fairly self-dependent in northern Ontario and across Canada in terms of resource-based industries, like mining and steel and forestry. We used to sell a lot of paper domestically. We used to sell a lot of steel domestically.

When I first was elected one of the big problems that confronted us in the agriculture industry was BSE. The problem was we had

turned all of our producing capacity over to the U.S. When the border was shut down, we could not ship beef into the States to get it produced to sell it back into our own market.

In the member's view, is there any way that we might turn this around so Canada's industries—

• (1210)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member for Markham—Unionville.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal Party was government, we had a strong package of policies out there to help the forest industry. I know that because I was the minister of natural resources at the time and, working with the minister of industry, we had a multi-billion program that involved loan guarantees, measures to help find new markets and measures for the forest industry to undertake green investments, to modernize and to adopt newer technology. There was a whole package of policies in 2005 to help the forest industry.

However, lo and behold, when the Conservative government came in, it cancelled the whole thing. Had we pursued that policy, which would have been in place had we not lost the election, I think the forest industry today would be in much better shape than it is.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I represent a community where the forestry industry is very important. Over the last year, in spite of the downturn, we have particularly appreciated many components of the economic action plan, both year one and year two. I look at job opportunities, programs and building fences. I look at a recent announcement where we are helping a mill decrease its emissions by 67.2% while at the same time putting power into the grid. We have made significant expenditures with significant jobs.

Given some of those important initiatives and also given the stronger economic indicators that show that perhaps we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel, how can the member opposite not support a budget that is very critical for Canadians at this point in time and doing many good things for communities?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, those forestry measures that have just been described as being undertaken by the government are crumbs. They are crumbs thrown to an industry dying because the current government decided to cancel our program for the forestry industry when it came into power. Our program was in the billions of dollars. She is talking about maybe a few million dollars.

I can tell the member that the current government has been no friend of the forestry industry, as has been emphasized time and time again by every party in the opposition.

Government Orders

As to why we cannot support the budget, I gave three good reasons: that it has been extraordinarily ineffective in getting a stimulus at the time when jobs were needed most; that it has done nothing directly to help the jobs which are in such short supply in this country; and that it has been dishonest to Canadians in imposing these massive job-killing EI premium hikes, as well as tax increases in other areas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the bill before us is the budget implementation bill.

Since we were opposed to this budget, because it did not address any of Quebec's demands or concerns, we will of course also oppose the budget implementation bill. But as Bloc MPs and representatives of Quebec, we all plan to be here in the House, unlike the members of other opposition parties, to vote against this bill and try to stop this legislation that does not address any of Quebec's needs or concerns.

Before the budget was tabled, during the time the Prime Minister gave us when he prorogued Parliament and locked us out, our finance critic, the member for Hochelaga, toured Quebec. He visited Lanaudière, Gaspé, the North Shore, Saguenay, the Outaouais, the Montreal area, the Quebec City area—the national capital—Abitibi, Montérégie and the Eastern Townships. He came to Joliette to meet with socio-economic stakeholders. People expressed a number of concerns and needs during this tour. One thing that clearly emerged was that Quebec, like Canada, needs a phase 2 of the recovery plan.

Whole industries have been forgotten by the Conservative government. I am thinking of forestry, aerospace and the manufacturing sector in general. Once again, we do not disagree with the efforts made to help the auto industry, which is heavily concentrated in southern Ontario. But we are seeing a lack of fairness, since the forestry and aerospace industries are being left out. And yet we know that in these sectors of the economy, the recovery that seems to be just around the corner is having no effect. On the contrary, even more big layoffs are planned, both at the sawmills and at the pulp and paper plants, or even in aerospace, particularly among small subcontractors.

What we needed was phase 2 of the recovery plan, and that was made clear from the consultations held by my colleague from Hochelaga. The government has simply kept going down the unfair path it laid out in last year's budget. No change is being made to respond to the concerns of the people and the various regions of Quebec.

When it comes to employment insurance, there again, there is no response to what workers, unions and municipal leaders have been calling for. We are well aware of the fact that, with adequate income security, not only would workers affected by layoffs have a minimum social safety net, but the regions could also maintain a degree of economic dynamism. Very clearly, if someone loses their job at Louisiana Pacific in Saint-Michel-des-Saints, the employment insurance benefits they receive will be used to pay the grocer in Saint-Michel-des-Saints and to buy clothing in Saint-Michel-des-Saints or Joliette. That will then help to maintain a minimum level of economic activity. The Conservatives' approach has been to cut both corporate and personal income tax for the benefit of the wealthiest,

the most well-off. What do those people do with the money? More often than not, they put it in tax shelters or send it to tax havens, as we unfortunately see all too often. Again yesterday there was a report about this happening.

In the case of corporations, the ones that get these tax cuts get them because they are making profits, while the ones that are not making a profit have received no form of assistance from the Conservative government.

On the question of employment insurance, we were hoping that the government would make an effort to make it an adequate social safety net. I would point out that in this respect the Liberals are just as guilty as the Conservatives. Let us not forget the famous Axworthy reform. The only "reform" about it was the name, because in fact it simply made a hash of employment insurance.

● (1215)

At the time, seven or eight people in ten contributed and could collect employment insurance if they lost their jobs. After the Axworthy reforms, this fell to four people in ten who contributed but were not necessarily entitled to benefits because of the excessively restrictive rules implemented by the Liberal government and maintained by the Conservatives. That explains why we have these huge surpluses.

Turning to what Quebec might expect regarding equalization, the Prime Minister promised for example during the 2005-06 election campaign to change the formula. He also promised not to change it unilaterally. Last year, the Minister of Finance changed it unilaterally by capping it, resulting in a \$1 billion loss for Quebec. This is a recurrent loss.

The government has been unfair to Quebec in other ways as well. For example, there is the way in which Hydro-Québec revenues are treated in comparison with those of Ontario Hydro, resulting in a loss to Quebec of \$250 million a year since 2008. It is absolutely incomprehensible. The capping of equalization, as I said, cost us \$1 billion last year. There is talk now of \$357 million a year, and this will continue. For example, between 2002 and 2004, the Government of Quebec received a little more in equalization than it was entitled to because the situation had improved. If my memory is correct, it was \$2.3 or \$2.4 billion more. The federal government asked the Government of Quebec to pay back the excess amount, and every year the Quebec government has to transfer \$238 million to Ottawa, while the other provinces that also received too much have not been required to pay anything. That is what is called protection money. Here too there is \$238 million a year that Quebec loses, which eats away terribly at its financial situation.

Government Orders

There is also the matter of the harmonization of the GST and QST. That is \$2.2 billion that the Government of Quebec is entitled to but has not received. It is totally absurd. How is it that the first jurisdiction to have harmonized its sales tax with the federal GST has never been compensated while all the others that followed have been compensated? It is very clear that the Conservative government wants to use this debate and these negotiations over compensating Quebec for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST to try to take over the collection of the GST and the QST, which has been done since 1992 by the Government of Quebec.

What they want ultimately from the Government of Quebec and all Quebecers is an act of submission in order to receive this \$2.2 billion, even though Quebec is entitled to it for simple reasons of fairness and equal treatment with Ontario, British Columbia and the three Atlantic provinces. We obviously have an awful lot of grievances.

I am short on time, so I will not talk about the government's crazy plans for a Canada-wide securities commission, a plan despised by all financial stakeholders in Quebec, a plan with the sole objective of taking away Quebec's only remaining financial levers. Nobody in Quebec agrees with this plan. It is unacceptable to the Quebec nation and to all Quebecers, be they federalist or sovereignist.

Everyone can see that there is absolutely nothing in this bill that is good for Quebec. That is why we will vote against this budget.

• (1220)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly this is a one-sided debate here. The three opposition parties are debating this 880 page omnibus bill among ourselves. The government has not put up a speaker for two days. When we have questions that we want to ask it about this bill we are not able to do that.

The member talked about the whole issue of the infrastructure and how it would be advisable for another round of infrastructure projects across the country but he says that in light of the fact that the Conservatives did not want to bring in the first set of infrastructure projects last year. One will recall that when they were brought in, the Conservatives were very reluctant. They did not even recognize that a recession was going on in the beginning.

When they came back and announced the infrastructure program, they were hoping they would not need to spend all the money they were committing to the program in the first place. The previous Liberal speaker alluded to the fact that the Conservatives made a commitment to spend the money but that they were very slow in spending it for a number of reasons. One reason was that they did not really believe in the program in the first place.

Does the member have any comments or observations about why no government members have been speaking over the last couple of days? Why do we have an omnibus bill here that throws in all sorts of measures, including post office remailers that have nothing to do with the budget implementation bill in the first place? Why would they do all of this and then simply not speak to their own bill?

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

It is clear to me that the Conservatives are unable to say anything in the House because many of them, particularly those from Quebec, are acutely aware that this budget implementation bill does not address the concerns expressed by Quebecers and a good number of Canadians. That is why they carry on fawning instead of doing their jobs and representing people.

The member is absolutely right. I did not mention infrastructure programs. I should have done so because there should be a second phase. In Quebec in particular, there were elections in early November in all municipalities. I know that in my region, many new teams were elected and they did not have time to submit proposals.

That is why people asked the government to allocate more funds and extend the infrastructure programs, as well as to push back the submission deadlines because, as I said, there were many new elected officials. They had to pass their budgets before submitting proposals.

I will close by saying that the member is absolutely right. The Conservatives have gotten into a habit that proves they lack transparency. They put little poison pills in bills that are already quite toxic. In this case, remailing has absolutely nothing to do with the budget and the budget implementation bill. This is nothing more than a sneaky Conservative tactic.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I found my colleague's comments very interesting. He spoke about the differences between the treatment of the automobile industry and Quebec's pulp and paper industry. I know that when I was running in the byelection, he was also very involved. I know that he said that if the government had treated the forestry industry fairly, it could have had a profound effect on very specific regions in Quebec. I would like to hear the member's comments on this.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I believe that my colleague from Hochelaga is talking about F.F. Soucy in Rivière-du-Loup, in the riding of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, which has announced an impending closure.

When I was helping our candidate in the election, the people I met asked for loan guarantees in order to support this industry. This would support F.F. Soucy in Rivière-du-Loup as well as numerous businesses throughout Quebec. They were unanimous; there was a consensus on this. I am sure that the member for Hochelaga was hearing the same thing during his consultation tour.

Government Orders

The Quebec Conservative members—Conservative Quebec members would be more like it—say that market forces are to blame. If market forces can be a good excuse for pulp and paper and for forestry, they should be a good excuse for the automobile industry too. However, this was not the case for the automobile industry because the Conservative Party favours the traditional automobile and oil.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do ask your indulgence and the indulgence of members but in light of the terrible tragedy in Poland, I want to acknowledge the Poles in my constituency of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. St. Anthony's Church in my riding has a Polish mass once a week. It is the home of St. Faustina Kowalska Polish Mission's Rev. Jan Grotkowski. Like other members, my heart goes out to the people of Poland and the people of Polish descent. We offer our prayers and our best wishes.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the budget. I have had the opportunity on other occasions to speak to an issue that matters a lot to me, which is the issue of poverty. I will not focus on that today but I take every opportunity I can to commend to members reading the Senate report, "In From the Margins: A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness". I commend Senator Eggleton and Senator Segal for the work they did leading that group.

The human resources committee of the House of Commons is doing the same kind of work. I see a colleague of mine from B.C. who is on that committee. The work has gone on for a couple of years and I am very hopeful that the committee will be coming to a conclusion and issuing a report. This country needs to do more about poverty and the Government of Canada needs to follow the lead of the six provinces that have anti-poverty strategies. I do not think the government has done anywhere near enough for the people who are most in need in this constituency, and I hope we can do much more.

I also do not like the fact that we have frozen our overseas development assistance. I think that is a huge mistake. Canada is abdicating a place that was head in the world, which may not have been enough but which was better, which was a symbol of peace and democracy and also a symbol of support and partnership for developing countries.

The budget is very weak on the environment and has been criticized for its lack of action. After the embarrassment of Copenhagen, we need to do more.

I want to talk about three specific things, the first being on the research and innovation side with the Canadian Council on Learning not having its funding renewed. This is a travesty. The Canadian Council on Learning was set up in 2004 and was set up to help develop a coherent vision for education, particularly post-secondary education in Canada. It has done amazing work. It has received plaudits, not only in Canada but from outside agencies as well who have said that the work of the Canadian Council on Learning must on, and everybody assumed that it would go on. I think even the Government of Canada assumed that.

I have a copy of a letter here that the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development sent in May 2009 to Robert Giroux, the chair of the board of directors of CCL, where she says, "I

agree the Canadian Council on Learning has played a key role in supporting efforts in this area of knowledge and skills". She also says, "I understand the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada officials began discussions with CCL in the summer of 2007 about stabilizing strategies for the organization".

CCL has put out some fabulous information, which is what Canada needs. When we talk about research and innovation and about where Canada is, we have always been a very educated country but we are losing the edge that we had as we focus less on research and innovation and education and other countries focus more on those things.

In fact, CCL has produced, as part of its composite learning index, a chart that looks at a number of countries, Australia, EU countries, Germany, U.S., Switzerland, U.K., New Zealand and Canada, and looks at a number of areas where education can be measured. For example, has there been a major review in the last five years? Every country, yes, but Canada, no. Has there been system-wide goals and objectives? Every country, yes, but Canada, no. Is funding aligned with national priorities? Other countries, yes, but Canada, no. Are quality assurance agencies in place? Other countries, yes, but Canada, no. These are the things we need to have. We need to have accountability in education. We need to know where we are. We need surveillance. We need to know where we are in terms of having a national post-secondary education strategy, and we do not have that. It is my view, and I think the view of many others, that is just totally and completely foolish.

When people heard that the Canadian Council on Learning was being shut down or that the federal funding, which provides almost all of the funding, was being shut down, they could not believe it. Arati Sharma, the national director of CASA, said:

Without the research of groups such as the Canadian Council on Learning, Canada will continue to lack the knowledge needed to improve access, persistence and quality in our post-secondary institutions.

● (1230)

A Toronto *Star* editorial stated:

But without the council's work, it will be more difficult for us to know how we stack up as a nation.

Cary Brown, an associate professor at the University of Alberta, said that the loss of funding to an organization like CCL is shocking and short-sighted.

Even the Secretary-General of the OECD sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Canada saying that we need to keep CCL in place. That is how important this work has been.

Why would the government cancel the funding for CCL? It is not a huge amount of money. The best thing we could say about this decision is that it is stupid. The worst thing we could say about it is that it was a deliberate attempt to hide the inadequacies of the government. When we have a decision that the best thing we can say about it is that it is stupid, it does not speak very highly of where we are going in post-secondary education, at least in coming to terms with where we need to be to compete with other nations.

Government Orders

We also had the example in this budget of the cancelling of the tax exemption for post-doctoral fellowships. This is something that not a lot of Canadians may understand but it will have a big impact on research and innovation in Canada.

The Minister of Finance, in defending that decision, had come up with the idea that the average salary of a post-doctoral fellowship student was \$70,000 a year. In fact, the average salary is less \$40,000 a year. It is nowhere near \$70,000 a year. We have 6,000 post-docs in Canada, a large number of whom will be hit, in terms of taxation, to the tune of \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year. If we look at that, it does not make any sense. We are supposed to be encouraging research and innovation. In this move, we are telling post-doctoral fellowship students to go look at the United States where the tax regime is better and the funding is stronger. We do not have strong graduate or post-doctoral investments in Canada. We cannot afford to lose people who are doing this kind of work.

One specific post-doctoral student, David Davidson, has put on paper what he is actually earning and he talks about his four children. He must make some decisions now that will mean he may not be able to put his children into some of the programs that they were in. He needs to look at how they are being schooled. He even needs to look at how they are being fed. He also may possibly need to look at leaving Canada like other of his colleagues have done to do their work. This is a short-sighted decision that makes no sense.

At the very least, the government should have reviewed that decision. Probably some clarification would have been good because we do have some post-docs in Canada who were entitled to the exemption and some who were not getting it. However, it should not just come out in a budget and tell people, who we want in Canada and who in many ways epitomize the research and innovation agenda that this country is seeking to achieve, that it will penalize them by making decisions that may not be good for them and may not be good for Canada either. That is another decision that does not make any sense.

The budget also announced the extension of the enabling accessibility fund. At page 131 of the budget, it states:

Budget 2010 builds on the success of this program by extending the Fund and providing an additional \$45 million over the next three years.

When the enabling accessibility fund was announced originally, with funding of \$45 million, people looked at it and wanted to know what it was made of. It turned out that of that \$45 million, \$30 million would go to two projects. So, of all the needs in Canada, two projects were to get 66% of that funding. That never made any sense to people in the disability community. Right away they recognized that the program was tailored specifically for two projects, one of which would be in the Minister of Finance's riding for a project that I believe he and his wife were on the board of, and that I think his constituency assistant is still on the board of. The disability community did not think that made any sense.

The kicker to that is that the money was never even expended and the program never got off the ground. It may be that it is a wonderful facility, and I have no reason to believe that it is not, but we have facilities like that across the country. We need to ensure that any program that comes forward serves the needs of the people who are most marginalized in this country, and when we talk about poverty

we talk about people with disabilities. They deserve, at the very least, to be treated to a standard of fairness and dignity that would allow them to have equal access across the country to the services provided by the Government of Canada.

• (1235)

We have seen decision after decision that does not make any sense, that does not take into account the needs of Canadians. For that reason, I do not like everything in the budget; there are many flaws. We do not believe that Canadians want to have an election, but Canadians deserve a lot better than this budget and deserve better than the current government.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member made some very valid points certainly about the lack of a national education strategy on the part of the government and how necessary it really is. But can he imagine for a moment what a Conservative majority government would be like? If a minority Conservative government is doing these kinds of things, dropping an 880-page omnibus bill with things like post office remailers in it, if it can get away with that and not even speak to its own 880-page bill, if it could do that in a minority situation, imagine what our future would be in a majority situation?

Could the member tell us what he thinks a majority Conservative government would do in the areas of research, innovation and a national education strategy? Where would the Conservatives take us over 4 or 10 years?

• (1240)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, my colleague asks a very good question which is what would the government do if it had a majority? I am probably not as equipped to answer as someone like my daughter who is a specialist in horror movies. She might have a better idea of what this country would look like. She is a beautiful little girl, 13.5 years old, but she likes horror movies, so she might have seen something that would resemble a Conservative government because I do not think we would recognize Canada.

I do not pretend that my values represent all Canadians. One of the great things about this country is that people have different points of view, different understandings and values. What is a common thread of citizenship in this country is that we take care of those who need help. That is a fundamental responsibility of government. That is the area, taking care of those who are most vulnerable, those who need the government's help, where the government has fallen down the most. If there were a majority government, which I do not believe would happen, people would be divided into the haves and have-nots, the winners and the losers, and there would be a lot more losers than winners.

Government Orders

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member is so good at looking forward, I wonder if he could share with the House what the government would have looked like if there had been a coalition between the Liberals, the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, if we would have seen the billions of dollars in tax cuts eliminated as the NDP as stated, if we would have seen the stimulus removed, if we would have seen greenhouse gas emissions standards removed, if we would have seen the job promoting agenda of this government, the focus on jobs and economic growth, killed by such a coalition government. Could he explain for us what that type of coalition would have looked like either going back or moving forward? Since he is so good at looking into things that might happen, could he also explain how he squares the circle with respect to working with his very good friends in the NDP and coalition partners in the Bloc Québécois?

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I have friends in all parties and I have friends across the country who would share the concern of a Conservative majority government. But if we had formed a coalition, I think the country could have survived with better EI enhancements, better investments in education, better investments in the environment, and better investments in health care. Those are things that would have been positive.

I also believe that our leader made the right decision when he said we had just had an election in October 2008. There was a potential of a coalition government, which probably would have definitely given more progressive legislation than the current government. But on the other hand, our leader was wise to say that we are going to let the government go for a while.

We supported the budget last year. We did not like some of the things that were brought in last fall. We are not in love with this budget, but on the other hand we do not think that Canadians want an election. But a coalition government would have offered a lot of progressive policies that could have benefited Canada. That is probably the only time in the history of Canada that the leader of a political party in Canada turned down a guaranteed opportunity to be prime minister because his first view at that point in time was not for himself but for his country. That continues to be his view and continues to be the view of the Liberal Party of Canada, that people come first.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity, brief as it is, to enter into the debate on Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, this massive tome that I hold before me today. My only regret is that I will not have the time to adequately go through many of my strongly-held views on the inadequacy of this particular document.

Let me begin my remarks by sharing with the House the content of a speech that I once heard by a civil rights leader in the United States. He began by saying that if there are five children and only three pork chops, the solution is not to kill two of the children and neither is it the solution to divide those three pork chops into five equal pieces because then all of the children go to bed hungry and none of them have enough to eat.

The social democratic point of view, as well as my own, is to challenge the whole idea that there are only three pork chops and to challenge the whole myth or lie, as it were, that in the richest and most powerful civilization in the history of the world, we cannot

provide for the basic needs of a family to not only survive but to flourish.

This introduces the theme, in the few minutes that I have today, that Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, fails Canadians in the most fundamental ways because a budget implementation bill is an opportunity for the redistribution of wealth in this country and speaks volumes about the priorities of the ruling party that crafted the budget and the implementation bill.

I am trying not to overstate things, but there has been an undeniable and recognized trend in recent years of the shift of wealth from the middle and working classes to a smaller and smaller elite of the very wealthy. This budget document does nothing to ameliorate this shift of wealth, what I argue is the redistribution of wealth, against the best interests of ordinary Canadians. In fact, it exacerbates the problem. It compounds that trend.

I will perhaps only have time to dwell on what I believe is an obvious argument to make my case. Within this document is found the argument that dealing with poverty or bringing seniors out of poverty through dealing with inadequate pensions, et cetera, is somehow a structural deficit and, therefore, the government cannot go there. Yet, giving permanent corporate tax cuts to the extent of \$15 billion is viewed as a necessary investment in the economy.

How did we ever come to such a perverse view of the distribution of wealth in this country that lifting seniors out of poverty is viewed as a structural deficit that we cannot allow ourselves to enter into and yet, in fact, going even further, borrowing money to give permanent tax cuts to corporations is viewed as an investment in the economy? Nowhere can anyone find a single study that proves beyond doubt that giving corporate tax cuts leads to job creation. It simply does not exist. I challenge and defy people to show me the direct evidence that giving yet another corporate tax cut will create jobs in Canada and can, therefore, be viewed as an investment.

This is all an elaborate hoax, in my view. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I accuse the neo-conservative mindset of perpetrating an elaborate, deliberate hoax on the Canadian people to further what I believe is a nonsensical argument that corporate tax cuts will produce the results claimed. It is a leap of faith that is not warranted. It was not even warranted when there was a budgetary surplus and now we have to borrow money to give another \$15 billion away.

● (1245)

I will give one example of how wrong-headed this is. It is a point made by the leader of my party, the member for Toronto—Danforth, to our recent NDP convention in Manitoba. He and our party costed out what it would cost to lift every Canadian senior citizen up to the poverty line. There are approximately 450,000 Canadian seniors living below the poverty line. The cost of elevating every one of those seniors just to the poverty line would be \$700 million. That is less than one-fifteenth of the corporate tax cuts that are inherent within this budget.

Government Orders

The leader of the NDP went to the Prime Minister with this very argument, suggesting the government put the brakes on these tax cuts for a year or two. Given that we are in an economic recession and we want to get money out there quickly, one way that we can stimulate the economy and achieve a secondary objective as well is to put more money in the hands of poor seniors. They would spend the money immediately and they would spend it in the right places, in the local economy. It would be in circulation the very next day at a cost of \$700 million, not an insignificant amount of money but it pales in comparison to the \$15 billion that the government contemplates giving in corporate tax cuts.

That is how wrong-headed it is, and one of the reasons that so many of these Conservative absurdities actually become government policy is the intellectual veneer that is applied to them by right-wing think-tanks that, in fact, are bought and paid for by the same people whose special interests are being served by this reasoning and this logic.

Again, I challenge the reasoning. I challenge the logic behind this spending. I am frustrated in my tone perhaps, but somebody has to sound the alarm. Somebody has to blow the whistle on this trend.

I saw a bumper sticker the other day on a car that said, "At least the war on the middle class is going well". In fact, working people, or those from the middle class on down in the economic spectrum, are feeling the pinch. It is not their imagination. Canadians should be comforted to know that it is not their imagination that it is harder and harder to make ends meet. It is true, and this is the predictable consequence of economic policies and economic trends that, in fact, leave less money in the pockets, transferring this wealth, once again concentrating this wealth, in the hands of people who do not even necessarily have the best interests of the country at heart, who do not even reinvest in Canada.

When given the opportunity, again I challenge anyone to show me the empirical evidence that these tax cuts create jobs in Canada. More often than not, that money is transferred to these corporations in the form of tax cuts and there are no strings attached. They could invest in an offshore plant. They could actually lay off 1,000 workers in the same year that we are giving them money. The irony is that these tax cuts are not going to the very businesses that do need some help and support. Because of its nature as an income tax break, it is only businesses that are showing profits that are benefiting from these particular tax breaks.

It is just wrong-headed and the leader of my party was right to appeal to the Prime Minister, to urge him, even if he cannot see fit to cancel this round of even further corporate tax cuts, to delay them or cut them in half, reduce them, use some of that money for something more strategic that would, in fact, elevate the living standards of the people who gave us their confidence, who sent us here to advocate on their behalf.

I was shocked to learn that 450,000 seniors are living below the poverty line in this country. I believe that if we had used \$700 million to address their specific needs, it would have put more money into circulation and it would have been the moral thing to do.

Let me perhaps spend the last minute that I have to comment on the last article of this 450-some-odd page tome, which is the final straw in the wholesale theft of the \$57 billion surplus of the EI fund.

• (1250)

I have been speaking on this for the better part of 10 years. When someone deducts money from workers' paycheques for a specific purpose and then uses it for something entirely different and denies them the benefits they were guaranteed when it was taken off their cheques, that is wholesale fraud. It is not only misleading; it is fundamentally wrong. That is \$57 billion that would have given us the fiscal capacity to address our social programs. It has been eliminated and gobbled up and used for different things—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been looking forward to asking Conservative government members questions, but we cannot find one who will speak and support this 880-page omnibus bill, the budget implementation bill. I would like to ask if one of the government members would speak about the \$15.9 billion profit that the top five banks in Canada made last year and the corporate salaries that those banks are paying their presidents.

The Bank of Nova Scotia president was paid \$9.7 million. The Bank of Montreal president was paid \$7.4 million. The Toronto Dominion Bank president got \$10.4 million. The CIBC president got \$6.2 million. This was at a time when we were supposedly in a recession. Bank profits are at record levels. The government's answer is to reduce the corporate tax rate even more.

Bank president salaries are at record highs in a recession. What is the government's answer? Its answer is to do nothing. In fact, the G7 and G20 have come out with guidelines on corporate salaries. Has the government implemented those? Not at all. I was speaking to a member of the financial community the other day and he said he thought it very unlikely that the government would ever support those guidelines, because the banks will not let it.

• (1255)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that makes my blood boil. Corporate governance never used to be considered a blue-collar issue. I have heard people say that Canada did not have to bail out its banks because they are in good shape. In fact, we assumed \$75 billion worth of risk from our banks to give them an easier ride through this economic downturn.

At the same time, these bank presidents have the nerve and gall to reward themselves with big, fat bonuses. I guess they should reward themselves, because they duped the government into underwriting all their risk so they can take all the profit. It is as if they like to socialize the losses and privatize the gains. They are socialists in one way. They want to share all their risk and losses. However, when it comes to their profits and gains, they are privateers again.

Government Orders

One of the most satisfying things I have experienced as a member of Parliament was when I crashed the shareholders' meetings of a bunch of the big banks. I moved a bunch of motions to limit the CEO salaries of John Cleghorn, Matthew Barrett and all these guys to 20 times that of the average worker. I was seconded by a wonderful guy from Quebec, Yves Michaud, who was seconding all of these motions.

One other motion we moved that I think the member for Elmwood—Transcona would like was for gender parity on the board of directors of every Canadian bank. The vote on that was the exact same as the Quebec referendum, 49.4% to 50.6%. We almost achieved gender parity on the board of directors of the Royal Bank of Canada through shareholder activism. People are going to have to stand up on their hind legs and demand that banks be more accountable to people, especially when they get away like bandits with their CEO salaries.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has about 30 seconds left.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by my colleague across the floor.

From my perspective, this government has not taken any action to stimulate Canada's economy, and more importantly, it has not taken any action to create a greener and more sustainable economy.

This morning I read that, in the United States, investments in clean technology jumped by 29% in the first quarter of 2010. That is 83% higher than the same period last year.

In order to “decarbonize” our economy and make it greener, should the government not have drawn inspiration from the Obama administration's budget from a few months ago and invested more per capita in energy efficiency and sustainable development?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc for a very poignant question.

The economic stimulus money inherent in this budget is a missed opportunity. We could have done something truly transformative with that money, like the Obama administration has done, to shift us from the carbon economy to a green economy rather than filling potholes and building more highways to accommodate more cars.

We could have spent that money on the work that needs to be done to save the planet. That is the work that could have been done to get us through the economic downturn.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing the implementation of a budget that never would have passed if the Liberals had not been so complicit or passive. Some showed up in the House to vote against the budget, as did the hon. member for Madawaska—Restigouche in New Brunswick, but there were not enough of them. That was a form of complicity, which is why we are here today talking about the budget implementation bill.

Before I get to the heart of the matter, I must say, I am concerned about several current issues, particularly what is happening in the crab industry in Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the riding I represent.

Earlier there was discussion about employment insurance measures that are missing from the budget. If the budget had truly met the needs of the public, the impact of the crab fishery crisis on the people of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine would not have been as great. They would have felt supported by a government that has their best interests at heart during such a difficult time. Some 1,000 jobs in Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine and 2,500 jobs in New Brunswick are at stake.

To give hon. members an idea of what that means, 1,000 jobs in Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine is equivalent to roughly 20,000 jobs in Montreal and even more in Toronto. If it were a matter of losing several thousand jobs in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver, there would probably be an emergency debate held today.

We have to take the time think about these people who are in difficulty as a result of mismanagement by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, which has reduced the crab quota by 63% this year. Such a reduction will have an impact: less money will circulate in the economy.

We heard today that Michel Chartrand died. I had the chance to meet and get to know Mr. Chartrand. If he were to deliver a speech today, his language would undoubtedly be quite colourful. If I were to describe the budget using the names of symbolic objects generally found in a church, I would be called to order. As hon. members know, tabernacles, chalices and hosts are found in a church.

In addition to his rather colourful use of language, Mr. Chartrand was a passionate man. He defended people in difficulty, like the workers in the crab fishery who are in crisis right now. That is why it is important to pay tribute to him today.

I know that the people in my party will be paying tribute to him later on during question period and members' statements, but I think it is important to take the time to acknowledge him right now.

In any case, we have a budget and an implementation bill. We are examining some aspects of the budget implementation bill, but we must also look at items that, unfortunately, are not mentioned in the budget, especially tax havens and employment insurance.

I would like to talk about tax havens. What does this budget actually do?

• (1305)

It ignores the fact that, if we changed the laissez-faire approach to tax havens, we could stop the budget hemorrhaging, which will fatten companies and individuals who no longer know what to do with their money. They go to the Bahamas or elsewhere and put their money in the banks' vaults to avoid paying Canadian or Quebec taxes. That hurts because this is not done by just a few.

Government Orders

I was listening to some supposedly distinguished economists who have done major studies and concluded that taxing the rich will not change much. Excuse me, but it will yield many millions, even billions. And remember, one billion is 1,000 million. We could recover billions of dollars if we truly tackled the problem of tax havens and tax loopholes. That is what should be highlighted and considered when presenting a budget. In fact, measures have been introduced but there are other measures that have been forgotten, relegated, ignored, clearly set aside, and that could help to balance the budget, even just a little, and result in interventions that more closely meet needs.

Speaking of needs, I wish to linger a little longer on the employment insurance issue. It is frightful what is going on there. It started some time ago with the Liberals and the Conservatives of the period, when they used to call themselves Progressive Conservatives.

On this issue I think in particular of Gaétan Cousineau, of the Mouvement Action Chômage Pabok. This is a person who has always been dedicated to the cause of employment insurance and the injustices in that field. I remember working with him and others when I was waging the employment insurance battle in community and union organizations.

That battle continues for me as a member, but at the same time, there have been what one might call “mini-measures” on employment insurance announced right and left by the Conservative government and by the previous Liberal government. I say “mini-measures” because one’s final impression, if I may be permitted some colourful language, is that of a drop of justice in an ocean of injustice. That is really what is happening.

The regions of Gaspé and Îles-de-la-Madeleine, like other regions in Quebec and Canada, have had to absorb cuts and to suffer them at the same time, for those cuts have impacts. When this sort of decision is made to cut employment insurance, to slash benefits, to arrange that fewer EI benefits are provided or that eligibility is made more difficult, the money is recovered somewhere, but there is an impact that can be felt across many regions.

Such an impact affects individuals as well as communities. Yes, it can affect individuals. I heard someone talk about people who earned their living at the minimum wage. Consider, for example, a wage of \$9 an hour for someone in the tourism industry who has to work as a cleaning lady, or in a restaurant or elsewhere. These people work split shifts for the minimum wage. This is not a job where you work 40 hours a week and everything is fine. On the contrary, there are situations where people have to work 20 hours during the week. Other times it is 35 hours or 60 hours a week, depending on what is happening in the tourism industry. These people must be available to work seven days a week during tourist season. That is why it is important to consider this issue.

• (1310)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was particularly interested in the member’s comments about tax havens. There is a provision in this 880-page Bill C-9 that deals with ensuring the provisions of the Criminal Code that apply to serious crimes related to money laundering and terrorist financing are

invoked in cases of tax evasion prosecuted under Canada’s tax statutes.

I would like to be able to ask questions of government members, but we cannot find any government speakers. There have not been any for the last couple of days on this bill. I am not certain whether or not there is an application in the bill that deals with the tax haven issue.

Interestingly enough, at this point the government is offering an amnesty to people involved in tax haven activities. It is basically a risk-free endeavour for the people doing it. We were only seeing this happen recently. There is a lot of activity of people involved in tax havens asking for amnesty. Some computer disks were sold, I believe it was by an employee of one of the Swiss banks, to the German government so that it could chase down German citizens who were involved in tax havens. When Canadians read about this, they started rushing forward to declare their income on the money invested in these tax havens. This is not going to discourage it if we are offering amnesty.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, I thank the NDP member for his comments. I must say that it is very hard to defend the indefensible. Sometimes it is so frustrating that there is no point. I think that is what is happening with the Conservative Party: it is defending the indefensible.

I remember it used to be that when a bank was bringing in \$1 billion in profits a year, that was a lot of money. I think that was the case not too long ago. Now, we do not talk about \$1 billion in profits a year, but \$1 billion in profits in a quarter, in a three-month period.

Furthermore, it is clear that these banks also take advantage of tax havens, which enables them to make even more profits and to provide more assistance to the people who also benefit from tax havens. It is a vicious circle.

The mini-measures announced are a smokescreen, a cover. They are a bunch of nonsense.

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are learning a lot today about what a Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition would have looked like had they had the opportunity to form one.

We know that tax cuts to Canadian families and creating jobs are not what they like. Cutting taxes or tariffs for our manufacturers, and investing in the environment and natural green technology are not what they are interested in. We know that our agenda on the economy and jobs is certainly not something they are interested in. We know they are not in favour of corporations that try to make money and employ people.

Government Orders

I wonder if the hon. member might share with me and Canadians some additional policies that a Liberal-Bloc-NDP coalition might be considering in the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, speaking of coalitions, let us talk about the coalition between the Conservative Party and the oil companies. That is a coalition. And what about the one between the Conservative Party, big business and the banks? That is also a sort of coalition.

If a political party wants to defend the poor and the people who need help the most, I see no problem supporting it or forming a coalition with it.

The Bloc Québécois has supported a Conservative budget in the past. I humbly remind the House that was the case in 2006 and 2007. At the time, there were useful measures concerning the fiscal imbalance.

I also remember that the current Prime Minister, before he became Prime Minister and while he was in opposition, was fully prepared to form a coalition with us.

What is the problem with a coalition? Why are they trying to turn it into a scandal? It makes perfect sense to form a coalition in order to respond to real needs.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-9, the so-called jobs and economic growth act, but based on my reading of it, I believe it needs a new title. This rather large tome is short on potential for jobs and growth and long on gimmicks, fee increases and a lot of challenges.

The bill does not address some of the key issues of importance to Canadians, such as child care and pensions. It does not assist small business to encourage job growth. It does not address the requirement for future economic success. It does not address the skills shortage, nor does it encourage lifelong learning. Bill C-9 does not focus on productivity and does not focus too heavily on innovation.

What the budget did do was increase moneys for the Privy Council Office for ministerial advice. It continues the deep investments in government advertising. I guess government ads will be showing up during the Academy Awards and the Super Bowl in the future. This bill funds a record number of ministers, and we all know how that is going.

This bill ensures another huge deficit after 11 straight surpluses. The Conservatives formed government and within a couple of years the country was back in deficit. At the same time the bill does not provide security for Canadians in tough economic times. This bill fails to improve the lives of Canadians. It fails to ensure economic security. It fails to ensure job growth.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, there are some 400,000 more unemployed today than in 2008. Youth unemployment is double the average national unemployment rate. There have been several reductions in manufacturing shift hours, which means

less take home income and a lower standard of living. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, we are 4.5% behind where we should be in terms of job growth.

What did the Conservative government do? It laid out a plan that would raise employment insurance premiums by 35% over the next four years. This payroll tax would cost a two-earner family \$900, and a small business with 10 employees \$9,000 more.

This bill would also impose an increased charge for air traveller security. The cost of an airplane ticket will rise. For a domestic one-way trip the fee of \$4.90 will rise to \$7.48, a \$2.58 increase. A domestic round trip fee will rise from \$9.80 to \$14.96, a \$5.16 increase. The fee for trans-border trips will increase from \$8.34 to \$12.71, a \$4.37 increase. The fee for other international trips will rise from \$17.00 to \$25.91, an \$8.91 increase. This will raise about \$1.5 billion in revenue over the next five years. That is quite a substantive fee increase.

I live on the island of Newfoundland. There are only two ways to get off the island of Newfoundland, either by plane or by ferry. We know what the government is doing with respect to air travel security. We know there is going to be an increase. To get off the island of Newfoundland, there are going to be increased costs.

On the other side of things, in order to get off the island of Newfoundland and Labrador I could drive and get the ferry at Port aux Basques. Marine Atlantic is a crown corporation. In the budget a small amount of money has been set aside to have additional capacity on this ferry. This small amount is a pebble in the ocean of requirements for Marine Atlantic.

The Auditor General produced a report which indicated that over \$1 billion was required to ensure that the province of Newfoundland and Labrador had adequate service and to ensure effective and timely capacity so that the transportation of goods and services is efficient and effective and available. During certain times of the year grocery stores hang a sign saying, "Sorry the boat didn't get in". In this day and age that is simply not acceptable.

• (1320)

I am concerned about this budget. There are several other things in Bill C-9.

There is some mention of pensions. The government is going to increase the maximum solvency ratio for pension plans from 110% to 125%, allowing for more overfunding. However, during the briefing on Bill C-9 the financial officials suggested there would not be many pension plans in a position to take advantage of this extra room. This is an overfunding of pension plans. I wish there were more businesses in a position to overfund their pension plans so that we could ensure that people who pay into their pensions actually have them at the end of their working lives when they retire.

For the second year in a row the government is using the budget bill to weaken environmental laws. We have this tome, as I said earlier, and buried in it is a change to ensure there will be some weakening of the federal environmental laws. This is not acceptable. If the government is going to change environmental laws, there should be full disclosure so that we can have a discussion and debate.

Government Orders

Also buried in this very large bill are changes to Canada Post. Bill C-9 removes the exclusive privilege of Canada Post to deliver mail outside Canada, allowing remailers to collect and transport mail to a foreign country. This is being done through the back door because it would not have been allowed through the front door.

In previous sessions of Parliaments the Conservatives tabled Bill C-14 and Bill C-44 to try to do just that. Now they have included it in this budget implementation bill. It should not be in this large bill. It should have a full discussion. It should go through the proper process. It should have a full review, complete disclosure. There should be complete democracy actually. People should be able to debate it and bring forward their ideas on how improvements could be made, or simply express their concerns with regard to remailers.

There is a lot in this rather large document that does not necessarily work for Canadians. It does not necessarily give the kind of economic security that Canadians are looking for.

We are coming out of a very difficult economic time. We still have a situation where, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said, over 400,000 people are still without work. We have been talking about this in Parliament.

Yes, the bill puts in place a second phase of the economic stimulus package and that is going forward.

My view on this bill is that a lot more should have been done to ensure Canada's position for the future. In my riding I have talked to a number of people. A lot more should have been done to ensure that we have the economic security that we require as Canadians, to have a vision.

KAIROS is an organization that did international development work. Sadly, its funding was cut by the government. For 35 years that organization did some great work worldwide. At the same time we see increases in advertising. I guess there is a disconnect between what Canadians want and what the government is prepared to allow to go forward.

This is a stay the course budget that is on the wrong course. I believe that Canadians deserve better. I believe that Canadians want better. I would be remiss if I did not say there is a lot in this bill that should be taken out, debated, disclosed and discussed in other ways.

Again, I appeal to the government and say there are things we should be addressing in this country. We take our international development work quite seriously. We take the needs of Canadians for health care and pensions quite seriously. It is time for us to buckle down and do just that.

• (1325)

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, previously bills C-14 and C-44 were before the House, and they contained provisions to destroy the Canada Post legal monopoly on mailings going outside Canada. What it would do to Canada Post would be devastating. As a result, either our postage is going to go up or there will be massive layoffs in this privatization move.

I do not know where the Liberal Party stands. The hon. member said she is opposed to the privatization of Canada Post, but the provision is in this budget implementation bill, Bill C-9, and her party is about to allow this bill to pass.

Which is it? Does she support the privatization of Canada Post or does she not? If she does not support it, then why are they allowing this bill to pass?

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a very interesting point about what is buried in this rather large document. What is buried in it is a provision that will remove the exclusive privilege of Canada Post to deliver mail outside of Canada, allowing remailers to collect and transport mail to foreign countries. As she indicated, that is very similar to what was being proposed in two previous bills, Bill C-14 and Bill C-44.

My point, and this is what I raised during my speech, is that it should not be encapsulated in this bill. If we are going to discuss Canada Post, bring it forward and look at whether there is a going to be an increase in the price of stamps or, as my hon. colleague called it, a privatization of Canada Post, do we not deserve to know the pros and cons, to have the conversation, the disclosure, the debate and the discussion to ensure we make an informed decision rather than having something buried in another bill?

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the member's speech. There is no doubt that, though Liberal members have stood in the House of Commons to criticize this crude omnibus legislation, 12 bills packed into 1, they seem to be supporting it yet again. This has gone on year after year after year. Whatever the Conservative agenda is, Liberals seem to endorse it.

Within the bill, and this is very important, there are punitive measures taken against the softwood industry. Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan were hard hit by the softwood lumber sellout by the Conservatives, supported again by the Liberals, and thousands and thousands of jobs have been lost.

Now, within this omnibus legislation, we have an export tariff that is going to kill even more jobs in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec and yet the Liberals are going to give the green light and vote to endorse yet another Conservative policy. I have to ask why the Liberals are selling out softwood communities across this country.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Mr. Speaker, I recall that the party my hon. colleague represents voted in favour of the budget implementation bill in the past budget.

There are things buried in this document, and I have brought forward quite substantive things that I think are of concern in it. On at least two occasions, possibly a number of occasions, I have voted against the budget and I will be doing so again with this implementation bill.

Government Orders

•(1330)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. It is interesting that some of the final comments to the previous speaker were about the Liberal position vis-à-vis the exclusive privilege at Canada Post. That is a nice segue, a nice place for me to begin, because that is going to be the focus of my remarks.

What was previously known as Bill C-14 and Bill C-44 is now incorporated into the budget implementation bill, basically making it an omnibus bill. They have stuffed everything they can possibly legally manage and think of in there in the hope that one vote gets a whole bunch of things passed.

One of the cute things for the Liberals in this particular bill is that when Bill C-14 first arrived, the Liberal critic at the time was very clear. They were in favour of this bill and they were opposed to maintaining the exclusive privilege, without any question. Then the bill came back with a new number, but very little else changed. I am not really sure what the new critic for the Liberals said. They sort of modified it a bit.

When my colleague asked a very specific question about support, the answer was about process. They were playing games particularly with the union in this regard and in terms of conversations they were having with them, because of course the organization that represents the 55,000 people who provide our important, crucial, efficient mail service cares about this issue.

The Liberals got some heat from the first go-around, so what did they do in the second go-around? They made up some kind of nonsense about how they were going to help the workers when it got to committee. When it got to committee, they would roll up their sleeves and be there for the workers. The difficulty is that the Bloc was already on record as being opposed to both bills and so were we. This means that, had the Liberals taken a position that said they were opposed to the bill, we could have killed the bill and there would not be any committee for anybody to roll up sleeves at and play games.

We are hearing the same thing again. As I understand it, and things change over there a lot, they are going to roll in a minimal number of members to technically vote against it. However, by not bringing in enough members to actually win the vote, the government will get what it wants. Bill C-9, the budget implementation act, moves on to committee. Tagging along like a trailer hitched to the back is a little issue that the government is hoping nobody will pay any attention to, and that is the issue of Canada Post and the exclusive privilege.

We have been around and around on this issue. What is frustrating is that something has happened during the tenure of the government. Let us understand where we are. The law right now says Canada Post has exclusive privilege to all mailing, full stop. Canada Post is not obligated or mandated under the Canada Post Corporation Act to solely be there as a cash cow to make money. It is quite the contrary. The act spells out that it is there to provide a similar service across the country at the same price to every Canadian, and it makes sure they charge reasonable fees for doing that.

Let me just say what an undertaking that is. Canada is the second-largest country by land mass on the planet, and we are promising to

deliver mail to the farthest corners of this huge country at the same price as we charge for halfway across downtown Toronto. We do it efficiently and the workers there do a great job. It is not perfect, but nothing is. However, when we look at this and compare it to other countries and the challenges, they do an excellent job.

All of a sudden, these private entities take a look over there. They are eyeballing Canada Post, as they do all the time. They are looking at the money to be made and they are saying that they want a piece of this action. So they just step right in and start getting involved in the international remailing issue. Canada Post reminded them it is against the law. To make a long story short, these private entities took Canada Post to court. They lost. They appealed. This is where it gets interesting.

•(1335)

On May 8, 2007, when the panel ruled on behalf of the Ontario Court of Appeal, this is what the judge said:

The purpose of the statutory privilege can only be to enable CP to fulfill its statutory mandate or realize its objects. It is meant to be self-sustaining financially while at the same time providing similar standards of service throughout our vast country. Profits are realized in densely populated areas which subsidize the services provided in the more sparsely populated areas.

It sounds like a great Canadian idea. That was to support the law. That means the work that these international remailers were doing remains illegal. It remains illegal this second as I stand here. So the government's intent is to change the law. If their buddies cannot win in the courts, the beauty of being the government is to change the law so the courts have no choice but to rule in the way it wants.

In fact, on July 25, 2006, the Conservative minister responsible said:

The activities of international remailers cost Canada Post millions of dollars each year and erodes the Corporation's ability to maintain a healthy national postal service and provide universal services to all Canadians.

What changed? It was illegal to start with. They went to court and lost. They went to the Court of Appeal and lost. The Conservative government in 2006 said it was standing by the exclusive privilege. What changed? I think what changed was that friends of friends got talking here and there. I am not suggesting anything illegal. I do not know enough of the details to make that charge. I would not say it was not, but I would not say it was. Anyway, discussions took place and the government had an epiphany. Conservatives woke up one day and said they had been wrong, the previous government was wrong, the courts were wrong, the strategic review in 1996 was wrong; they needed to sell off part of Canada Post and at the same time have their backbenchers make speeches about no privatization of Canada Post and hope that no one followed the details enough to know that they really were starting to privatize Canada Post. That is what is going on.

Government Orders

The Liberals are going along with it. We are going to have a couple of opportunities, if the Liberals want to suggest that what I have put forward is not accurate. We are going to ask that the bill be severed and we are going to need support for that. We have the votes and we would hope that the Liberals would join with the Bloc and us in severing off this piece of Bill C-9 and at the very, very least, allow Canadians an opportunity to have some input before the government monkeys around with the financial stability of something as important as Canada Post, particularly when 55,000 Canadians and their families rely on those jobs. It is not there solely to create jobs. It is not there to be a cash cow. It is meant to do exactly what it is doing, and that is why this change ought not to happen. It is wrong. It is not in the interests of Canada Post. It is not in the interests of the workers there and it is not in the interests of Canada. So we ask the Liberals to finally get off the fence, join with us, get it severed and let us kill this sucker before it kills Canada Post.

• (1340)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for a terrific speech on this matter. I have a feeling he wants to say a few more words on this subject.

However, I want to point out to him that the member for Hamilton Mountain, when she made her speech on Bill C-9 the other day, did point out that the bill under a different number was initially introduced by a Liberal MP, perhaps when they were in government. That was news and a surprise to me. Then the current government took up the torch and carried it forward under Bill C-14 and Bill C-44, knowing that it would never pass because of members like the member for Burnaby—New Westminster who would dig his heels in and make sure it did not get passed. The Conservatives put it in this omnibus bill, which is a treacherous way to approach an issue like this.

Would the member like to continue his explanation of why the bill should be severed and not proceeded with?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I compliment my colleague for his remarks in this regard and certainly my fellow Hamilton MP and the hard work she does on this and every file.

The fact is this story goes back so far, it is like we have to pick a point in history where we want to work from. I will go from the point when the Conservative government came to office. There is no question that the previous government had been talking about this sort of thing, but then in 2006, fairly early on in the government's term, the Conservative minister, when asked about this, said:

The activities of international remailers cost Canada Post millions of dollars each year and erodes the Corporation's ability to maintain a healthy national postal service and provide universal service to all Canadians.

The question that remains is this. What has changed since the Conservative minister stood up and read what I just said as the government policy? Now it has flip-flopped and it is doing the opposite. The House and Canadians have a right to know what has changed. What is so important that caused the government such a massive flip-flop?

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the budget implementation bill, but the budget passed the House by a vote of 142 to 132.

We have a minority government. If all three parties, the Liberals, the Bloc and the NDP, come together, we would have the majority vote to kill the budget implementation bill.

What would my hon. colleague say about members who on one hand said in the House that they were very much against the budget, but then when it came to vote, at least 30 of them disappeared and allowed the budget to pass? This may happen again with this bill.

What does he call that kind of behaviour?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, my colleague puts me in a horrible position. What would I call that? I am standing on the floor of the House of Commons. I cannot call it what I would like to call it, but I think people will sort of get it by looking at the circumstances.

When people say one thing and do another, there is a word for it, and I will not go there. However, make no mistake. This is the trickery on the part of the Liberals. They want everything to focus on the budget. They have already cut the deal and have said that technically they are opposed, but they will not bring enough members in to actually win the vote and stop the government.

My question to the official opposition is this. The NDP will put a motion to sever this part of the bill, to deal with it separately and vote on it separately. Will the Liberals be there to do that? It will be interesting to see.

The main point I want to make is the fact that there are two political shell games going on. One is the government has snuck this into a budget implementation bill rather than let it stand on its own, as it has done twice before. The second one is the Liberals, who hope that one of their big, hot political potatoes gets dealt with quickly under the cover of—

• (1345)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brampton—Springdale.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a budget which impacts my constituents in Brampton—Springdale and many Canadians across the country.

In attending numerous events in my constituency, meeting with many Bramptonians, both men and women, in their workplaces, listening to seniors in seniors homes and visiting with children at schools, I have had the opportunity to hear first-hand of their needs and their priorities.

The past few years have been a very difficult time for many families in Brampton. Brampton based companies, such as Nortel, Saputo and Chrysler have closed their doors. Other small and medium-sized businesses have also struggled. The impact has been felt by many men and many women who were employed at those companies.

There are men and women who have been let go and others who have been laid off. There have been seniors and many of the people who have been laid off who have been forced to make that choice between filling up the fridge, the medicine cabinet or their gas tank.

Government Orders

Many of those families that have struggled in the past few years are looking for opportunities for themselves to ensure they can put bread and butter on the table. They are looking for opportunities to ensure their children have the very best in education, resources, tools and skills they need to succeed. Then there are new Canadians who are looking for opportunities, the opportunity to contribute, to build a better Brampton and a greater and stronger country. Also seniors out there want to have the opportunity to age with dignity and respect.

I think all Bramptonians, like all Canadians, are looking for that better hope for tomorrow and a brighter future. This is why the budget implementation bill brought forward by the government is so incredibly important. It is important to those Bramptonians who are struggling to be heard and those individuals who are the vulnerable.

Let us take a look at the areas in the automotive and manufacturing sectors, both crucial to the economy of Brampton and Brampton families. When Chrysler closed its doors, over 2,000 men and women lost their jobs overnight.

It was amazing to see how the community came together in this time of need. The Chrysler Action Centre was opened for the men and women who had just lost their jobs. The union showed its leadership. Chrysler took leadership. The provincial government also took leadership in opening the centre, which provided resources such as resume writing and job finding for those who had lost their jobs.

They were also looking for leadership in that time of need from the federal government. The budget claims to have created many jobs, but the fact is the country has lost almost 300,000 jobs. Look at our unemployment rates, which continue to rise.

Just a few weeks ago in my riding, Saputo, Canada's largest cheese maker, announced its decision to close its plant. The result is 190 Bramptonians are out of jobs. These are hard-working families that are looking for hope and for the opportunity to give back.

We must ensure that as these people struggle in this recession, there is the opportunity to provide them with job security for the future and with the resources and the skills they will need to find new jobs.

This global recession really knows no boundaries or barriers. A demographic that has often been forgotten is our young people. This recession affected everybody. We only have to take a look at the unemployment stats for young people aged 15 to 24, which reached a record high in 2009 of 20%, the highest jobless rate since 1977.

A report of the Community Foundations of Canada, called "Canada's Vital Signs 2009", provides insight into the dire situation young people face. The normally lucrative summer months for these young people was 30 hours. It now is down to 23.4 hours. We must ensure these young people have the opportunity to go to university or college. They need that employment during the summer months.

Investing in education, investing in our young people is really about investing in our country's future economic prosperity and productivity. No government can turn a blind eye to young people. We must ensure they have the opportunity to get the educations they desire. As Canada moves forward, we must base the opportunity to go to college and university not on the pocketbook but on the desires and passions of students.

● (1350)

Another challenge we have faced is the issue of infrastructure. Communities like Brampton, one of the fastest growing cities in the country, put forward a number of projects for which they needed funding assistance from the federal government. We heard during the Speech from the Throne and budget 2009 that funds were committed but many of those funds had not been spent.

Out of \$2 billion for the infrastructure stimulus fund, \$874 million were unspent. Out of \$200 million for the green infrastructure fund, \$186 million were unspent. The list goes on. Money unspent means projects have not started, which mean people do not have the opportunity to work.

The government needs to act to help Bramptonians who are looking for those jobs. If the projects Brampton had put forward had been implemented, it would have created an estimated 21,000 jobs for Bramptonians who lost their jobs in the past few years.

Then there is the issue of health care. In many ways Brampton's new civic hospital has been leading edge both in terms of technology and the provision of services. However, there still continues to be a challenge faced by not only for my constituents but by many people across the country, and that is the issue of wait times.

Looking at the statistics of Brampton Civic Hospital, individuals with complex conditions are having to wait 17.5 hours versus the average of 13.6 hours. We realize much work needs to be done in the area of health care. People are looking to the federal government for leadership on this issue.

As a health care provider, I have had the opportunity to see first-hand the challenges encountered in our health care system. There is the issue of wait times, as well as the shortage of doctors. We must ensure we provide Canadians with access to doctors, specialists and nurses. We must invest in health human resources to ensure that every Canadian, regardless of where one lives in Canada, or the amount of money one makes or one's socio-economic status, has the opportunity to receive the very best in health care. It is the hallmark of our great country.

I also want to touch upon the issue of poverty. Poverty is a growing concern in my riding. People look at the medium income of almost \$80,000 and think my riding must be doing very well. The fact is the issue between those who have and those who have less continues to grow.

The issue of poverty is increasing and impacting many individuals. Many low-income and single-parent families are living too close to the poverty line. People like Edna Toth with the Peel Poverty Action Group have done incredible work to raise awareness.

Statements by Members

We must ensure, as we move forward, that the federal government once again takes leadership and puts together a national housing strategy. We are one of the only industrialized countries in the world that does not have a national housing strategy.

There are many issues to discuss and many challenges being faced by constituents, Bramptonians and Canadians. I hope the government will take this opportunity to examine these challenges and work in a co-operative and collaborative manner to ensure Canadians get the changes they need and, most important, the hope for a better future and brighter tomorrow. We must ensure that every man, child, woman and senior in Canada are given the resources, skills and tools needed to succeed. When Canadians succeed, our country succeeds.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member said how terrible the budget was in that it did not deal with poverty, health care, wait times, housing and youth employment. Astoundingly, reading from *Hansard*, not long ago she did not show up to vote against the budget. She was among the 30 Liberal MPs who did not show up. As a result, the budget passed. Maybe they deliberately did not show up, I do not know.

Is the member planning to vote in favour of or against the budget implementation bill or is she planning, like last time, to simply not show up?

• (1355)

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Mr. Speaker, I take the responsibility that my constituents have given me very seriously and whenever there is a vote, every attempt is always made to show up to ensure that we vote. I am a strong voice on behalf of my constituents in Brampton—Springdale. The member's implication that it may have been deliberate is certainly not the case and was certainly not the intention.

When we talk to Canadians at Tim Hortons or meeting them at various events, they are not looking toward an election right now. Hearing the NDP members, I think if they had their way Canadians perhaps may be at the polls on a monthly basis.

Canadians are looking to have work done and action taken on the issues and priorities that are important to them. I am glad that we in the Liberal Party are working in that co-operative and collaborative manner to ensure that Canadians receive the results that they need.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit unclear. If the member does not want an election which is why she did not turn up or she did not turn up because she was busy in her constituency, I am terribly confused. Perhaps the member can clarify this. Is she going to turn up next time and perhaps she could also tell us why she did not turn up last time or was it something to do with the Liberal inaction policy? How does this all fit together? It seems so bizarre.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Mr. Speaker, I cannot recollect the exact date that the vote took place, but I can tell the House that every attempt is made to always show up for all votes. There is certainly never a deliberate attempt, I hope, by any member of the House to ever miss any votes.

I think when Canadians and our constituents elect us, they expect that we would actually be here to represent their views and their ideas. I can say that by no way, shape or fashion is the budget perfect, but we all know the consequences of what could occur in voting against a particular budget which is a confidence measure.

I would hope that in 2010 we would all be able to turn a new page and start talking about the ideas and the issues that are important to Canadians across the country. I think the time, politically, has come to really put partisanship aside, to put political rhetoric aside, and to really start getting down to work and start delivering results.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in an effort to move this very fruitful debate between the New Democrats, the Conservatives and the Liberals forward, I would like to inform my colleague, who does not recall the date of the vote, that it took place on March 10, 2010. Now I would like to hear the member's response.

[*English*]

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Mr. Speaker, being a very community-oriented and grassroots constituency MP, I am going to ensure that I get back to the member with my exact whereabouts of where I was before I say something that is incorrect.

I want to take this moment as well to wish the entire Sikh community a very happy Vaisakhi. It is our new year today. I wish everyone who is watching CPAC the very best wishes for the new year, great health, happiness and prosperity moving forward into the new year.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

TERRY FOX

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago today a young Terry Fox woke up, shook off the pain of his marathon run the day before, and started day two of his Marathon of Hope.

He ran 143 consecutive marathons, until he could not run any further. His run was spectacular and he galvanized a nation.

I was honoured yesterday to return to Newfoundland with the member for Calgary Centre-North, Betty and Rolly Fox, and Terry's siblings, Fred and Judith, to announce that our government will be creating a fitting historical park at the starting point, Mile Zero, of the Marathon of Hope.

I want to thank Donna Ball of St. John's for bringing the idea of the park forward. Like Terry Fox, she was thinking of others when she shared her dream. We will appropriately honour the place where Terry dipped his leg into the Atlantic Ocean to start his Marathon of Hope.

The members of this House pay tribute to Terry Fox, a Canadian legend, a Canadian hero.

Statements by Members

●(1400)

[Translation]

MICHEL CHARTRAND

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebec labour leader and political activist Michel Chartrand passed away yesterday.

Born in 1916, he experienced Quebec's development throughout the 20th century. He witnessed the Great Depression, Maurice Duplessis, Quebec's dark ages, and then the Quiet Revolution, Lesage, Bourassa, Lévesque and everything that has happened since then.

But he was not content to simply observe Quebec's political scene: he was a participant, a critic and, for some, a conscience.

In the late 1940s, Michel Chartrand began fighting for unions at a time when Maurice Duplessis was in collusion with big industry to block all attempts at unionization. He inspired generations of workers and never stopped fighting for their rights.

Even though some of his views were not in keeping with the beliefs of Quebecers or those of the Liberal Party, it is important that we recognize Michel Chartrand's contribution to Quebec's political life and development.

Michel Chartrand, a great Quebecker.

* * *

GENIE AWARDS

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec film industry dominated the 30th annual Genie Awards ceremony last night in Toronto.

The film *Polytechnique* won in nine categories, including best film and best direction, awarded to Denis Villeneuve, and best actress, hailing the performance by Karine Vanasse of Drummondville, and best supporting actor, Maxim Gaudette.

The Master Key also won in two categories: best make up and best original score. *Father and Guns* won the Golden Reel award for earning the most at the box office. Marie-Hélène Cousineau and Madeline Ivalu's *Before Tomorrow* won for best costumes. The award for best live action short drama went to Pedro Pires for *Danse macabre* and the best animated short film award went to Cordell Barker's *Runaway Train / Train en folie*.

Xavier Dolan's *I Killed my Mother*, recognized around the world but not nominated for a single Genie award, received the Claude Jutra award for the best film by a first time director.

Congratulations to the artists of the Quebec film industry whose talent and creativity have once again allowed them to shine.

* * *

[English]

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the career of Max Keeping, an exceptional

journalist, who served this country and community for over 50 years, 37 of those years as the news anchor for CTV in Ottawa.

His journalism was not from 30,000 feet above; his stories were grounded, connected to everyday people.

What makes Max even more special is the dedication he has shown this community, especially kids. For Max, the world is simply a large village filled with people. Their stories, which he transmitted to us, made us care about that village.

Recently, Max stared down prostate cancer and used it as an opportunity to bring awareness and make a difference yet again.

Today, we salute Max Keeping for his contributions to journalism and to our community. We thank him for making us know and understand each other as fellow citizens even better.

Thanks Max.

* * *

VAISAKHI

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in April Vaisakhi is celebrated in Canada and in 161 countries by 30 million Sikhs. Last week, along with my colleagues, I attended an exuberant Vaisakhi parade in Vancouver.

In 1699 the 10th Guru Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji created Khalsa and gave Sikhs a code of conduct and discipline based on equality, justice, peace, courage, honesty, community service, and the universality of brotherhood, along with a visible identity and the five Kakars.

Creation of Khalsa meant the obliteration of all creed or caste based on disparities and discriminations, and the courage to fight injustice and oppression. His teachings are for all humankind. During the last century, Canadian Sikhs have made a significant contribution to the social, cultural and economic prosperity to our great country.

I invite all members, senators and staff to join me and celebrate Vaisakhi in Parliament Hill on Thursday evening in the West Block. The very best wishes to all on the celebration of Vaisakhi.

* * *

●(1405)

GENIE AWARDS

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television on its 30th anniversary of the Genie Awards, which has served to celebrate and affirm Canada's national cinema.

During last night's Genie Awards, 21 Genies were presented, recognizing the excellence of Canadian creativity and talent in the film industry.

[Translation]

I would like to mention that the film *Polytechnique*, about the terrible massacre of 14 young women at the École Polytechnique in 1989, won eight awards. Stories like this one, which have left deep scars on us all, need to be told, and film is often the best way to tell them.

I want to congratulate the creators and actors and everyone who worked on *Polytechnique*, as well as all the Genie Award winners.

[English]

As Canadians from across the country tuned in to watch the 30th annual Genie Awards, we again witnessed Canada at its best.

Congratulations to all the winners and to all the nominees.

[Translation]

Congratulations, everyone.

* * *

[English]

GIRL GUIDES OF CANADA

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to visit with the Newmarket Unit of the Girl Guides of Canada. Guiding is alive and well in my riding and a wonderful group of young girls are learning the tenets of friends, fun and community service.

On this occasion the local guide leader had organized a career night. A number of women from careers not typically of first choice for girls came out to share their experiences one-on-one with the group. A police officer, emergency responder, home-based entrepreneur, real estate agent and myself were all invited. I never had so many thoughtful questions asked of me in the hour I was there.

As someone who regularly talks to young people in the schools to encourage young women to consider a political career, I commend the guide leader for organizing this opportunity to introduce young people to non-traditional female careers.

We should each take the time to share our life experiences with our youth. If we open the door of possibility to just one young woman, it will be a success.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL CHARTRAND

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has lost a passionate and committed man, a legendary straight talker who marked the history of the Quebec nation: Michel Chartrand.

Whether as a printer, a defender of the French language or a union organizer with the CSN and other unions who took a particular interest in injured workers, Michel Chartrand worked tirelessly for Quebec independence and social justice, two causes that he felt were closely linked. He also stood up for workers in many labour conflicts in Quebec, including the asbestos strike in Asbestos and the strike in Murdochville.

This man, who had a keen social conscience, never lost his capacity for outrage. May his exemplary life inspire us all. As he said, "Everyone should get involved in politics. In democracy, everyone has a duty to do what they can to make the world a better place."

Statements by Members

My Bloc Québécois colleagues join me in paying tribute to this great man. We thank Michel Chartrand, for his invaluable contribution to Quebec.

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[English]

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian Forces members put their lives on the line for our country, and for the rights and freedoms of people around the world.

Our Conservative government has a solid and unwavering record of support for the armed forces and their families.

Yesterday our government introduced the fairness for military families act. After years of Liberal governments ignoring this important issue, our Conservative government is making sure that serving their country does not prevent Canadian Forces members from full access to parental benefits and spending quality time with their child. This is in addition to budget 2010 commitments to facilitate EI sickness benefits for the family members of soldiers killed in the line of duty.

For a change, the opposition should stop disparaging our brave men and women. Do the right thing and support this bill.

* * *

POLAND

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 70 years ago in its plan to enslave Poland, the Kremlin committed a horrific crime against the Polish people.

Over 22,000 Poles, the flower of the Polish nation, officers, priests, professors, doctors, were shot and dumped into mass graves in Katyn forest.

Finally, after 70 years a proper and dignified commemoration was to take place with Polish President Kaczynski, First Lady Maria, along with 90 of Poland's top government and military officials.

Saturday morning, on the plane's approach to Katyn, tragedy struck.

We cannot make sense of the curse of Katyn. However, as a result of this tragedy, the whole world has learned of the horror, long buried and long hidden in Katyn forest.

Canada's House of Commons, Canadians, and the world stand in Solidarnosc with Polonia in their current grief and we bow our heads in Solidarnosc with the 22,000 martyrs of Katyn.

[Editor's Note: Member spoke in Polish as follows:]

Wieczny odpoczynek racz im dac Panie. Niech spoczywaja w pokoju wiecznym.

Statements by Members

(English)

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●(1410)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our priority as a government is job creation and economic growth. The Liberal Party just does not get it.

The Liberals only economic talk is about all the ways they plan to raise taxes. They talk about raising the GST. They talk about carbon taxes, and they want to impose job-killing business taxes to pay for big, expensive programs.

Even staunch Liberals, like former Paul Martin's former communications director, Scott Reid, are shaking their heads at the Liberal leader's out of touch policies. Yesterday, Reid said, "The Liberal Party is clearly not connecting to middle class Canadians, not connecting to people in terms of day to day realities..."

This is not surprising. Canadians know what Liberals will not admit, that higher taxes kill jobs, which is why they have told us loud and clear to fully implement year two of Canada's economic action plan, and that is exactly what we will do.

* * *

[Translation]

MICHEL CHARTRAND

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our country has just lost an extraordinary and passionate man.

Born in Outremont in 1916, Michel Chartrand devoted his entire life to social justice.

Chartrand joined the Cistercian monastery in Oka before starting his remarkable political and labour rights career. His spirituality was always an integral part of his vision.

However, like Tommy Douglas, whom he worked with for years, he did not see the purpose of saving the soul of someone who had nothing to eat.

Together with Thérèse Casgrain, he laid the foundation, as the founding delegate, for a new party, which became the NDP in 1961.

The course of history led him to devote himself, sometimes in a sensational way, to the independence of Quebec. However, his top priority remained the people.

In 1998, at 81 years of age, he led a spirited fight against Lucien Bouchard's zero deficit. He also fought to achieve zero poverty in the world.

On behalf of all New Democrats, we salute Michel Chartrand.

* * *

MICHEL CHARTRAND

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned of the passing of a man who left his mark on Quebec with his outspokenness and his dedication to the labour

movement. Michel Chartrand passed away Monday evening at the venerable age of 93 after a full life of activism.

Michel Chartrand was born in Outremont on December 20, 1916, and described himself as an "honest and true activist who calls things as he sees them". A talented orator, he began to catch people's attention during the Asbestos strike in the late 1940s. He was involved in the labour movement and politics, running for office at both the provincial and federal levels.

It is impossible to talk about Michel Chartrand without thinking about his abiding love for Simonne Monet-Chartrand who always staunchly supported her husband in all his causes.

Today, on behalf of my colleagues from Quebec, I want to honour the memory of a great Quebecker and I would like to take this opportunity to offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Chartrand.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to applaud the determination and courage of a woman named Marie-Hélène Dubé, a fighter who is determined to live life to the fullest.

In 2003, on her 32nd birthday, this mother of two learned that she had thyroid and lymphatic cancer. After two recurrences and treatment after treatment, she is doggedly fighting this illness. She has exhausted her 15 weeks of employment insurance sickness benefits, but she refuses to feel sorry for herself. Instead, she has decided to take on another battle: she has launched an online petition calling for employment insurance sickness benefits to be extended.

This petition has been signed by 62,766 people and I am presenting it for her in the House today.

On behalf of all of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I wish to pay tribute to her and tell her how much we admire her tenacity and unwavering determination. Our best wishes go out to her for a full—

●(1415)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

* * *

[English]

POLAND

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, *Kochani Polacy*, as a proud Polish-Canadian, it is with shock and great sadness that I rise today in the House to offer my condolences and heartfelt sorrow for the tragic and sudden passing of President Lech Kaczynski, First Lady Maria Kaczynska and 94 of Poland's best and brightest sons and daughters, leaders of the nation, all of whom were on their way to honour those who 70 years ago were lost in the Katyn massacre.

I know President Kaczynski was an integral part of Poland's solidarity movement. He will be remembered as a man who stood fiercely to protect the principles of democracy and human rights. I pray for him and his wife and offer my sympathies to his daughters and grandchildren for this senseless tragedy.

What a sad twist of fate that the loss of Poland's best and brightest has now happened twice in a generation. These two events will be inextricably linked together forever, but I am confident that Poles, a resilient people who have overcome hardships and challenges through the partitioning of their great nation and the horrors of totalitarianism, will rise and overcome again.

May we always remember those who have died and the service they gave to Poland. May they rest in peace.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians have recently noted the Liberal leader's obsession with referring to himself as a proud member of the political class. Let us just say that we are not surprised, after all, the Liberal leader holds the hereditary title of count and admits that he is flattered when people refer to him by this title.

He also said that while living in England, when the Liberal leader was away from this country for 34 years, he found the title useful among English society. He refers to himself as a proud member of the political class. This is the House of Commons, not the House of the elite. This Chamber is green like the grass of the commons. It is not royal red.

The Liberal leader has forgotten that we are elected as commoners and represent Canadians from all walks of life. His bizarre Old World ravings about class and title demonstrate that he is totally out of touch with Canada, Canadians and life in the 21st century. It also proves that the Liberal leader is not in it for Canadians. He is just in it for himself.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the government did some recalibration. The Prime Minister fired a minister and called in the Mounties. Days later we still do not know why. Yesterday we heard that there were some serious allegations brought forward by a mysterious third party.

What were these allegations? What are they? Why were the Mounties called in? And, why will the government not tell Canadians the truth?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said publicly, allegations were brought to his attention last Thursday and on Friday morning he referred those allegations to the RCMP, the relevant authority, so that it would have the opportunity to review them and take the action that it felt was necessary.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Simcoe—Grey and Mr. Jaffer make quite a pair. We learned that Mr. Jaffer had use of his wife's ministerial car and use of his wife's office for lobbying purposes, all of which appears to violate the government's code and may well violate the

law of the land. Through all of this, the Prime Minister did not just turn a blind eye, he praised the minister.

Would the government explain how this pair was allowed to get away with this for so long?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the allegations in question that the Leader of the Opposition and leader of the Liberal Party refers to came out in media reports just last Thursday.

I will just say this. Taxpayers work hard for their money and every tax dollar should be used wisely while on government and public business.

● (1420)

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, can the minister stand in this House and say that the matters that are alleged to have been conducted are a good use of taxpayer money? It hardly seems to us that it is.

[Translation]

The former minister's husband was arrested on drug possession charges. He used the minister's limousine, driver and office to conduct lobbying activities.

Why did the Prime Minister turn a blind eye to these activities for seven months?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen some recent media revelations with respect to this matter.

However, I will say that taxpayer dollars should be used for official government purposes. Commercial activity should not be pursued with taxpayer dollars. It is incumbent upon all members of Parliament, all of us in this House regardless of party, to follow all the rules as set forward by the Board of Internal Economy.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to deny that Rahim Jaffer had privileged access to the Conservative cabinet. Yesterday, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities avoided telling us about other projects in which Mr. Jaffer was involved as an unregistered lobbyist, projects they discussed.

I will try again. On August 13, the ministers of Labour, National Defence and Canadian Heritage attended the same event as Mr. Jaffer in Barrie.

What did they discuss with Mr. Jaffer, and did they report the subjects of those discussions to the commissioner, as required by law?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I can report to the House that Mr. Jaffer had no discussions with me about any of his commercial interests.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Jaffer seems to have better access to the federal cabinet than the Prime Minister. Let us keep going.

Oral Questions

On January 27, 2009, Mr. Jaffer was at an event in Ottawa with the Minister of International Cooperation and, again, the Minister of Labour. On April 30, 2009, Mr. Jaffer was at an event with the Minister of Health and the Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

Would any of those ministers like to tell us what discussions they had with Mr. Jaffer and whether they were disclosed to the Commissioner of Lobbyists as required by law?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have strong legislation with respect to the registration of lobbyists. It was this government that established an independent lobbyist commissioner who reports to Parliament and not through the federal government.

If the member opposite has any specific allegations he would like to make about anyone, I would encourage him to bring forward specific details and forward them to the commissioner so they can be investigated independently.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a whole host of reasons could be behind the fall of the former minister for the status of women, such as: obtaining a \$800,000 mortgage without a down payment; the use of her ministerial mailing privileges and driver by her husband, Rahim Jaffer; supposed ties of this couple to the underworld; or a dinner that the minister is alleged to have attended with an individual associated with organized crime.

Is this why the Prime Minister decided to relieve the former minister for the status of women of her duties and turn the case over to the RCMP? Are there other reasons besides those already uncovered by the media?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was made aware of the allegations last Thursday and Friday, and these were duly forwarded to the appropriate authorities. We will let the RCMP do its job and draw its own conclusions.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the last time a prime minister asked the RCMP to investigate one of its ministers was when Brian Mulroney was in power. At the time, Mr. Mulroney gave the reasons for his actions.

Is the Prime Minister less transparent than his predecessor, Mr. Mulroney?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after this allegation by a third party came to light and reached the Prime Minister, he took action on Friday morning.

Let us be clear. These allegations do not concern any other member, senator or government employee.

* * *

● (1425)

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Information Commissioner's report is proof that this government is anything but transparent. In addition to receiving a failing grade, the Privy Council Office, the Prime Minister's department, is clogging the access to information system by

requiring that sensitive requests go through it before information is made public.

When will the government stop hiding the truth from people?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the advice we have received from the Information Commissioner. We are going to keep on improving the process of providing information to agencies and Canadians that request it.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the political interference in the access to information process is so disturbing that the commissioner has announced that she will be systematically investigating political interference when she assesses the various departments.

How can the government, which promised transparency, explain that the Information Commissioner has reached the point where she is noting all the political interference designed to block the release of incriminating documents?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to note that there are more than 40,000 information requests. We have provided information in most cases, but we want to improve the process.

It is also important to note that the commissioner did not find any case of interference by a minister. That is very clear.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the lack of transparency of the government truly is mind boggling. There were the bogus closed-door consultations on pensions that cost \$375 just to get in the door. There is a complete absence of the truth on the scandal regarding the detainee transfers in Afghanistan. Now the so-called tough on crime Prime Minister will not even tell Canadians why he has called the cops on one of his own.

Why are the Conservatives afraid to tell Canadians the truth for a change?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was quite the spirited question from the leader of the New Democratic Party. Here is what happened. On Thursday evening some allegations were made—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know the Minister of Transport's microphone may not be working very well, but with the noise in the House I cannot hear a word he is saying. We have to be able to hear the minister. Everyone wants to hear the answers to the questions. The Minister of Transport has the floor. We will have some order please.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I am always calm, cool and collected in this place as has been my long-term practice, but let me say this. Some serious allegations were raised with the Prime Minister's Office. He immediately acted in a quick fashion, an appropriate fashion. He referred the matter to the relevant authorities so that they could look into the issue.

Oral Questions

I think that is a high standard of ethical conduct and one with which Canadians should be proud.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, maybe the cat has got his tongue, or is it the Prime Minister?

[*Translation*]

It is pathetic to see the law and order party hiding behind the police and refusing to answer questions. This party is so far from being transparent that even the Office of the Ethics Commissioner said, “based on the information the Commissioner has at this time, she is not in a position to proceed with an inquiry”.

Why are the Conservatives not telling us the whole story? What do they have to hide? Who does the Prime Minister want to hide? Himself?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we had anything to hide, we would not have referred the matter to an independent officer of this House. We would not have referred this matter to the independent Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the relevant authorities.

Let me be very clear. The allegations in question do not involve any other minister, any other member of Parliament, any senator, or any employee of the Government of Canada.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a pattern here. That is the problem.

What the Information Commissioner is reporting today is that there is a pervasive problem of delays in responding to access to information requests, inappropriate use of time extensions, ill-enforced delegation of authority for decisions.

The government will not tell Canadians what is going on in Afghanistan. It will not tell Canadians what is going on with Mr. Jaffer's wife. It will not tell Canadians the truth. What is holding the government back? Come on, let us get some answers around here.

• (1430)

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the advice that we get from the Information Commissioner.

As a matter of fact, she has pointed out there are 40,000 requests. That is an increase. The majority of those are handled within 30 days. Another 10% are handled within between 60 and 120 days. There is about 12% of those requests that take more than 120 days to get answers. We want to see that improve. Every minister is committed to do that.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, normally when the government runs into ethical trouble, as it did with NAFTA-gate and the Julie Couillard affair, it does not go to the police.

When the government needed a whitewash to try to convince Canadians that no one got privileged access to insider information, it hired a small Ottawa firm called BMCI. Why was BMCI not called in this time?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with this group, BMCI, to which the member for Winnipeg South Centre refers.

What I can say is when serious allegations were brought forward to the Prime Minister, he forwarded them to the relevant authorities, to an independent officer of Parliament and to the independent police authorities. It was the responsible thing to do. We will await the conclusions that come from these relevant authorities.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know the government was happy with the reports it got from BMCI in the NAFTA-gate and Couillard affairs. After all, it was told what it wanted to hear.

Why would the government not investigate whether privileged and valuable information was shared with the men behind Green Power Generation Corporation?

Is the real reason the government did not hire BMCI this time is that one of the people on the payroll at BMCI is Patrick Glémaud who is also Rahim Jaffer's business partner?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a bit of a stretch. I have not heard of the organization in question to which the member refers.

When the allegations came forward to the Prime Minister, he asked an independent officer of Parliament and he asked the relevant police authorities to look into the matter. I think it showed a high standard of ethical conduct to allow the appropriate authorities to look into the matter in question.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two offices side by side on Queen Street, both employing Rahim Jaffer's business partner, Patrick Glémaud, the very same Patrick Glémaud who was the Conservative candidate in Ottawa—Vanier in the last election and featured a campaign photo op with the Prime Minister. They are two well-connected Conservatives. One is the former Conservative caucus chair and husband of a minister, and the other is a Conservative candidate. They had privileged access, they say, to the government for themselves and their clients.

How could Canadians possibly believe otherwise?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a very interesting report. Transport Canada is also on Queen Street. I wonder if that is a coincidence.

Let me say this. When the Prime Minister received the information, he took action quickly. He took the appropriate action and referred the matter to the relevant independent officer of Parliament and the relevant police authorities. He did so quickly. I think that was the important and ethical thing to do.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is a very clear, simple question. How many firms are there in Canada with less than 10 professionals that have received more than \$3 million of federal government contracts since the government came into power? Can the minister name a single one, other than Rahim Jaffer's business partner and Conservative Party candidate's BMCI?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is such a well-known organization that I quite frankly have never heard about it personally.

This government has put ethics and accountability high on the agenda. The very first piece of legislation this government introduced and successfully passed later that year was the Federal Accountability Act.

When we were fighting to bring in the federal accountability legislation, every single step of the way we got opposition and fights from the Liberal Party of Canada. We cleaned up the ethical mess that we inherited, and we can be very proud of that.

* * *

•(1435)

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant-Colonel Gilles Sansterre, the chief investigator looking into cases of torture in Afghanistan, indicated to the Military Police Complaints Commission that he had no reason to doubt the good faith of the Afghan authorities who investigated the cases of torture. Now there is some detective work.

How can the minister claim that everything is fine and that no torture has been proven, when the military police blindly trusted the Afghan torturers?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these allegations have been made previously.

I think it should be pointed out again that a new transfer arrangement was put in place by this government, almost three years ago now, to clean up some of the mess that was left by the previous administration. There is a better system in place and the hon. member should take some comfort in that.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, diplomat Richard Colvin, testifying this morning before the Military Police Complaints Commission, reiterated that there was a systemic risk of mistreatment of Afghan detainees by Afghan authorities.

How can the government reject the credible testimony of Richard Colvin, when the police are not investigating and take the word of the Afghan authorities, the very people accused of this torture?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the individual in question is testifying again and this time before the Military Police Complaints Commission.

These allegations have been aired before. The commission will hear from other senior officials in the coming weeks. We should let the commission continue to do its good work.

[Translation]

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the widow of Rémi Beaugard, the president of Rights & Democracy who died at work, has stated that the members of the board of directors appointed by the government have done everything possible to tarnish his reputation and take control of Rights & Democracy in order to align its policies with the government's pro-Israel stance. Ms. Trépanier is calling for a public inquiry.

Will the government rein in the board of directors of Rights & Democracy until an independent inquiry can shed some light on the organization's shift in mandate?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleague again that the government is not involved in the day to day operations of Rights & Democracy. It is an arm's length organization.

Mr. Beaugard actually met with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs last fall and also addressed the standing committee. He did not raise any concerns about the deteriorating situation at Rights & Democracy at either of those meetings.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these are the same people who, without any proof, invoked Rémi Beaugard's supposed poor management and who did not hesitate to award an accounting contract to their friends without a tender, while playing ignorant when asked about the contract and the price of it.

Does the government not feel that the farce has gone on long enough and that a public inquiry is needed?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can only say that this government is confident the board and the new president will ensure the long-term success of Rights & Democracy.

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

The minister has a very negative report with respect to the performance of Mr. Beaugard to which he has taken the strongest of objections and which was raised again by his widow, Mme Trépanier, in her testimony today.

Could the minister undertake to allow that report to be expunged and eliminated from the record of the Privy Council precisely because it is so damaging to the reputation of Mr. Beaugard and has no basis in fact?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the details of that report but I think the short answer to that is, no.

Oral Questions

•(1440)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer should have been wiser. I hope that he will have a chance to think about natural and fundamental justice when it comes to an employee like Mr. Beauregard.

I have another question for the minister. There was important testimony today about governance and the activities of the board of directors appointed by the government.

Why not launch a public inquiry into the important questions asked by the witnesses today?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for allowing me to say once again that we have every confidence in the board and its new president. Rights & Democracy is an arm's length organization and the board of directors is responsible for the governance of the organization.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2007, Chris Alexander, Canada's former ambassador and deputy UN special representative in Afghanistan, had warned the government that Asadullah Khalid was the culprit behind the murder of five UN workers and possibly behind other attacks on the internationals in Kandahar.

Why did the Conservative government continue to protect Khalid from being fired by Karzai? And, why did it continue to pay \$12,000 per month to this butcher of Kandahar?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to reassure the House that there is nothing new here.

The Government of Canada does not appoint governors in Afghanistan. The independent Government of Afghanistan appoints its own governors. This is true today and that was true then. The individual in question, in fact, was removed as governor some time ago.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government knew full well that Khalid was a torturer. Chris Alexander had told it that he was a killer of UN workers. This morning, Colvin testified that Khalid was an extortionist, drug smuggler and a torturer.

Knowing all of this, the government continued to support him and continued to pay him \$12,000 per month.

Why did the current government not sever all ties with this butcher of Kandahar?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, those allegations have been aired before and have been addressed in the past. Military and diplomatic officials spoke to those allegations last fall before the special committee on Afghanistan.

The Government of Canada regularly questions the Government of Afghanistan on those and other human rights issues.

* * *

NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the stated goals of this week's nuclear security summit in Washington is to ensure that terrorists never get their hands on nuclear weapons.

Would the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs explain how Canada is responding to this summit?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is true. This government recognizes that the prospect of nuclear material falling into the hands of terrorists is a threat to global security.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced that Canada would send Canada's weapon grade uranium to U.S. plants where it will be rendered unusable for bombs. By doing so on the first day of the summit, the Prime Minister was sending a strong example for other countries to follow.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we now have new reports that Asadullah Khalid, the governor of Kandahar, and his agents regularly tortured and abused civilians, that Canadian officials were aware of these atrocities and yet Canadian generals and the Canadian government, even the Prime Minister, supported and worked with the governor while all this took place.

Perhaps most shocking is the news that the governor allegedly ordered the bombing deaths of five United Nations workers. This comes from former Canadian ambassador, now Conservative candidate, Chris Alexander.

When will the current government stop avoiding and covering up the truth and call a full public inquiry?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just told my hon. colleague in the official opposition, those allegations have been fully and widely aired before the Special Commission on Afghanistan and the Canadian government continues to press the Government of Afghanistan with regard to the respect of human rights.

•(1445)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the murdering of UN workers is news that came out publicly yesterday but was known to the government years ago.

Back in 2007, when the Afghan president offered to replace him, the Conservative government defended the governor of Kandahar. Then, in 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time suggested that he be replaced. Clearly, the member for Beauce knew what was going on, so why did Canada continue working with Khalid and support his hideous gang?

Oral Questions

Why will the minister not acknowledge his government's responsibility, do the right thing and call a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of all this?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me say again that the Government of Canada does not appoint governors of Afghanistan. This is true today and it was true then. In fact, the governor in question was removed some time ago.

* * *

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the chair of the CRTC appeared before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. He is concerned that raising foreign ownership levels above 49% could have negative repercussions on the telecommunications industry and the government's ability to protect broadcasting of Canadian content.

With yet another witness speaking out against the government's proposed deregulation, will the Minister of Industry take this opposition into account?

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was at those meetings as well where we also heard from a witness from the OECD who talked about how Canadians were paying more for their telecommunications services than people in other countries and about the great need for competitiveness in those industries.

* * *

[Translation]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Amazon case is a perfect example of how little this government cares about culture.

The Union des écrivaines et écrivains québécois, or UNEQ, which is Quebec's writers' association, and the Association des libraires du Québec, the booksellers' association, have condemned the Conservative government's decision to allow Amazon to set up a warehouse in Canada. The UNEQ is concerned that Amazon, with its hegemonic approach, will end up dictating its own terms and conditions to authors, publishers and distributors.

Why is the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages allowing measures intended to protect culture to be systematically undermined and trampled by his government's ideologies?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our decision regarding Amazon.ca is a responsible one and it is good for Canadian culture.

We received over \$20 million. We will create new Canadian jobs in Mississauga. We will have new positions for Canadian authors. This decision was made following a process that complied with all of the regulations. Canada's culture will definitely be protected.

I also want to point out that our government is investing in authors, in magazines, in the Canadian economy and in the

francophone economy. We are keeping our promises to protect Canadian culture.

* * *

NORTEL

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 1, a number of disabled Nortel employees will begin a new life of misery.

Because their benefits were not insured, they are at the bottom of the list of Nortel's creditors as that company goes through bankruptcy. The employees will lose 85% of their income as well as the medical benefits they cannot do without.

When will the government help these people by agreeing to amend the legislation?

[English]

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly we are concerned about this situation, as well as the pension situation facing pensioners at Nortel. We continue to consult.

As a matter of fact, the finance committee will be hearing today from folks from Nortel who will bring forward their concerns. We will continue to consult and certainly wish to hear from our colleagues from all of the other parties in terms of how to address this issue.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by doing nothing, Parliament will be condemning many long-term disability employees to a life of poverty every time a company goes bankrupt. If we as legislators cannot protect Canada's most vulnerable citizens against such unfair situations, then what is Parliament for?

My question for the government is non-partisan. For purely humanitarian reasons, will the government immediately listen to the pleas of these workers and work with all parties to fix this broken law?

• (1450)

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, we would like some co-operation from the other parties, bringing forward their concerns. We can have discussions.

On the issue of pensions, the Minister of Finance has recently launched cross-country consultations. In fact, the Canadian pension system is already recognized as one of the strongest in the world.

We are working to ensure what works best for Canadians and we welcome the input of members of all parties of the House in how to address the concerns of all Canadians on issues like this.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to accountability and Toyota, the government has abandoned public safety. In fact, Canadians have been forced, through their own private measures, to uncover the truth and get justice for themselves.

Oral Questions

Now it appears that, contrary to their claims, Toyota executives have known about acceleration problems for the past five years.

The Motor Vehicle Safety Act allows for a criminal investigation. This has been done in Japan and also in the United States. Will the minister commit to pursuing a criminal investigation so Canadian families can get the justice they deserve and compel Toyota to finally follow the law?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member said at the outset of his question, the safety of Canadian motorists and Canadians on our roads is the utmost priority for the Department of Transport and it has done a significant amount of work to ensure that vehicles are safe.

In Canada, cabinet ministers cannot direct criminal investigations. It would be a rather frightening prospect for members of this cabinet to launch criminal investigations against people or companies. Those are done by the non-partisan public service.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that excuse does not cut it. The Prime Minister can do so and his department can start to do some work on this file.

It is amazing when we look at what is happening out there in the rest of the world. Europe and the United States have been looking at this matter and Japan has been looking into it and actually bringing criminal investigations back to 2006.

Why will the minister not do anything when public safety is at risk and consumers are getting whacked by this? It is time for the minister to act and to do something for a change.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member of the New Democratic Party had been to the transport committee he would know that Toyota officials and officials from my department have come forward and testified. They have talked about the significant number of investigations that have taken place with respect to Toyota and with respect to other motorists.

If the member wants to talk about action, this government has delivered more for Windsor in terms of infrastructure than any government in Canadian history, and we can be very proud of that.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government has a solid record of unwavering support for our Canadian Forces members who put their lives on the line for our country and for their families.

Unfortunately, the rules for EI parental leave prevent some soldiers who are deployed from spending quality time with their new child.

Could the minister tell the House what our Conservative government has done to rectify this important issue that Liberal governments ignored for so many years?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Nepean—Carleton for his tireless work on this important issue.

Yesterday I tabled the fairness for military families employment insurance act which would ensure that members of the Canadian Forces who put their lives on the line to protect us and our country will no longer be prevented from spending quality time with their new child.

I do hope the opposition will join with us in supporting this important bill so that our military get the support they deserve.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the interim Information Commissioner says that the right of Canadians to access to information is at risk of being totally obliterated because of delays. As she said, delays are tantamount to censorship. She said, "We used to be leaders in transparency. I think we should reclaim that space", and that, "Canada is no longer a transparency leader".

The government falsely claimed that it would be accountable. My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. When exactly will the government become transparent and accountable?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the analysis given to us by the Information Commissioner. There were about 40,000 requests that came to various government departments and agencies this year. The majority of those are answered within 30 days and about 12% of those take more than 120 days.

We are concerned about that, and so is she, and that is why we are putting in place mechanisms to ensure that particular percentage increases in terms of speed and that we get better at that.

* * *

●(1455)

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, the government refused to join in the negotiations for a trans-Pacific free trade agreement because of perceived threats to supply management. Now Canada would be willing to take part in these negotiations.

Does that mean the government is prepared to make compromises on supply management, as it did during the negotiations with the European Union?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne, the government made its position on supply management very clear. We support farmers and we intend to defend supply management both in the discussions with the European Union and in the negotiation of free trade agreements.

Oral Questions

[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation terminated a grant to the government's International Development Research Centre that was to be used for an anti-smoking campaign in Africa. Why? The IDRC chair, former Conservative cabinet minister Barbara McDougall, was until recently on the board of directors of Imperial Tobacco. This is not just a major conflict of interest; it is another embarrassment of the government on the international stage.

How did the government miss such a blatant conflict of interest? Will it demand Barbara McDougall's resignation from IDRC today?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is another quality mischaracterization from the fourth party.

Barbara McDougall is a former cabinet minister, with decades of experience in foreign affairs and international development as well as in the private sector. As a matter of fact, she resigned from the board of Imperial Tobacco last month.

Let me make clear that the International Development Research Centre, which is an independent crown corporation, has stated that the IDRC's board never discussed tobacco control while Ms. McDougall was serving on the board of Imperial Tobacco.

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during today's meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, committee members formally expressed their displeasure with the antics of the Liberal member for Parkdale—High Park. As if it was not bad enough, his own party, the Liberal Party, has removed him from the committee as one of its permanent members.

Could the chair of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities please inform the House of the motion adopted this morning and when it will be reported to the House?

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning the committee passed the following motion, "That the Committee... present a report to the House of Commons regarding a possible breach of privilege and/or action of contempt on the part of the MP for Parkdale-High Park in divulging privileged information from an in camera meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on March 25, 2010, against the will of the committee and with the intention of sharing this information with the public, and that the Committee ask the House to take whatever action it deems necessary".

This will be reported to the House on Wednesday.

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ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, access to information delays are widespread across the

Conservative government and some departments' political interference is the norm. At NRCan, all but the most routine requests are held up by the minister's office. At CIDA, the minister's office saw all but the most basic administrative requests, amounting to about 98% of the 150 requests CIDA received.

Why does the President of the Treasury Board not get the message that political interference needs to stop in the access to information system?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of the 40,000 requests that come to departments are handled in less than 30 days. Further to that, there are about 10% of those requests which take over 120 days. We are concerned about that and would like to see that improved.

We have also increased funding to the Office of the Information Commissioner by 20%. We have added seven corporations that never before were analyzed for information because the Liberals refused to allow it.

There are more requests all the time, and we want to see the rate of response to those requests improved.

* * *

● (1500)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has consistently undermined the Status of Women portfolio. First he cut a critical \$5 million in financing and then he reassigned the portfolio from a senior minister to a junior minister. Now, after having to remove the junior minister from her job, he has handed the portfolio to a minister who has other obligations.

Canadian women deserve a competent and dedicated minister, not a blundering junior minister and not someone for which this is a side duty.

When will the government finally stand up for the women of Canada?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been an advocate of women's issues my whole life, whether it be in my community, as opposition, in cabinet and in caucus. I look forward to working with the hon. member and all women parliamentarians to address the issues that matter to Canadian women.

However, I hope she, like I, is very proud of the achievements women have made. In fact, Canadian women are achieving more than ever before. We have made incredible progress in terms of the amount of women in our public service, women leading corporations across the country and women seeking public office.

Again, let us try to find common ground and work together.

Government Orders

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Trailbreaker project would bring tar sands oil to the United States by reversing the flow of the pipeline between Montreal and Portland, thereby increasing the potential for accidents.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources confirm for us that he will not allow any permits to be issued for that purpose until an environmental assessment is done by the BAPE and permission is received from the Government of Quebec?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is no doubt aware that the National Energy Board has some authority in this matter, if the pipeline is interprovincial.

All rules and regulations will be followed, as with any other project.

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[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the former Minister of State for the Status of Women, the government's refusal to shed any light on the situation makes its situation infinitely worse.

Why were the police called in in these circumstances? We must know that it was worse than a violation of airport security, worse than leaving government documents with a biker gang acquaintance, worse than going to a cocktail reception, while Brenda Martin languished in jail, and worse than using government offices and resources for private purposes.

Will the government not do itself a favour and simply answer the question?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the issue involved came to the Prime Minister's Office's attention just last Thursday evening. On Friday, the Prime Minister did the reasonable, ethical and appropriate thing by referring the matter to an independent officer of the House and to the relevant authorities. Let them review the situation and we will see where it goes.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to ask the Leader of the NDP, the member for Toronto—Danforth, to officially offer a public apology to me for what he said yesterday during question period. I quote:

[English]

“we have seen links between the member for Beauce and biker gangs”.

[Translation]

This comment is completely wrong and untrue and I am asking the member to retract it and to apologize.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I can retract those remarks. We were not trying to say something that was untrue. We understand that this was sensationalized in the media, but we misspoke and that was not our intention.

I hope the member will accept my apology.

● (1505)

[English]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. A week and a half ago I sent out an email concerning the business of the transportation and infrastructure committee. Since then some members of the committee have expressed the opinion that it was in breach of privilege and therefore I apologize unreservedly to the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

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.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to speak to Bill C-9 on the implementation of the budget that was passed in March.

This bill has over 800 pages and implements various initiatives set out in the budget presented on March 4. However, two measures that did not appear in the budget were added to the budget implementation bill. The first is the change to the Employment Insurance Act and the creation of the employment insurance operating account. The other measure, of greater concern to me, has to do with the liberalization of one of Canada Post's business lines.

In the 10 minutes I have, I would particularly like to discuss the measure included in Bill C-9 concerning Canada Post. I will address only that issue, for it is very important to me.

I represent a rural riding, where many communities have rural post offices. I recently presented petitions with over 6,000 signatures expressing the wishes of the people of my riding, who want to keep their rural post offices. They are worried about various measures taken by the government, including privatization and more recently, the restriction of Canada Post's exclusive privilege.

The Bloc Québécois strongly opposes the privatization, even partial, of Canada Post. We believe that corporation must remain a public entity in order to maintain universal services and consistent rates throughout Canada.

Government Orders

I just want to talk about this part of Bill C-9, because I want to draw attention to the hypocrisy of this Conservative government, which has been trying since 2007 to get a bill passed that would take away Canada Post's exclusive privilege concerning international mail.

First, in 2007, the government introduced Bill C-14, which died on the order paper. In June 2009, it tried again with Bill C-44, which also died on the order paper when Parliament was prorogued.

Now, the government is using the budget implementation bill to introduce this measure and avoid public debate on restricting Canada Post's exclusive privilege concerning international mail.

I also want to talk about this measure to show the insidious nature of the Conservatives' tactic, which is designed to push through their plan to deregulate the crown corporation. We know that the government wants to completely privatize Canada Post, and it is clearly taking the first small step toward that end by including this measure in the budget implementation bill.

I am very active and very close to the people who work in the post offices in my riding. Since Bill C-9 was introduced, I have received many letters from my constituents who work as letter carriers. They are asking me to oppose this bill, because they are afraid of losing their jobs. I also share their fears about how the bill will affect the crown corporation's revenues.

For the people who do not know what I am talking about, I will explain what will happen if Canada Post's exclusive privilege—which we call remailing—is removed.

• (1510)

This measure will permit letter exporters to collect letters in Canada for transmittal and delivery outside Canada. That means that Canada Post's competitors will be able to collect mail in Canada and Quebec and send it outside Canada.

What that means, in fact, is that the forwarding of mail by a remailing company consists in collecting mail items from business clients residing in one country and sending those items to another country where the postal rates are lower. This usually involves a developing country where the mail is sorted and remailed to a third country. This is a cost reduction method and a way of ensuring that the revenue from that mail goes to Canada Post.

Allow me to illustrate this by way of a specific example. A Canadian company wanting to send mail to the United Kingdom goes through a remailing company. The company then sends the mail in bulk to a branch office in another country where the sorting is done at a fraction of the price. The mail is then resent to the United Kingdom. The company will have saved up to 30% of the delivery cost because the mail will have already been sorted.

A business using the services of a remailing company could save up to 66% of the price Canada Post charges. I am getting letters from my constituents about those figures. It is only natural that people working at Canada Post are as concerned as I am because they have good jobs with good working conditions that allow them to live in dignity and be consumers and thereby participate in the economic development of their community and region.

Who does this benefit? We must understand who will benefit from this measure. Some time ago, the government undertook a strategic review of Canada Post. The government reviewed all of Canada Post's activities and, as a result of its analysis, made a number of recommendations. One of these was to revisit the exclusive privilege of Canada Post in the area of international remailing.

However, the strategic review did not indicate the negative consequences for Canada Post of deregulation, even partial deregulation. It was also unclear whether partial deregulation would permit remailers to directly or indirectly attack Canada Post's exclusive privilege within Canada.

They are opening up a crack in order to challenge the exclusive privilege of Canada Post with respect to international mail. However, this may be just the first step. In fact, the entire issue of postal operations within Quebec and Canada may be next.

The Bloc Québécois believes that this bill will weaken Canada Post by eliminating some of its revenue sources. This situation could speed up its desire to regroup the distribution of mail in certain areas, which would result in cuts to home mail delivery to many Quebecers as well as potential job losses.

• (1515)

I will conclude my speech by stating that, for the Bloc Québécois, it is important to maintain this universal public service and uniform rates throughout Quebec and Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely 100% correct in her analysis. This bill was introduced by a Liberal member a number of years ago while in government and then it was variously introduced by Conservatives, under Bill C-14 and Bill C-44 last year in a minority Parliament.

Knowing that it could not pass the minority Parliament and it would be held up, the government seized upon an opportunity to throw it into an 880-page omnibus bill dealing with the implementation of the budget. This has nothing to do with the budget. This is basically an attempt to privatize the post office by stealth at the end of the day.

If this remailer issue is passed by the House, we will see a gradual erosion of the post office's position in the country. These letters, I believe, are going to be sorted in places like Jamaica where the costs are much less. We will see a reduction in jobs in Canada as a result.

It is the dishonesty of the government in its approach. It does not have the courage to bring this bill forth, as it did last year, and subject it to proper debate and scrutiny in the House. It has stuck it in an omnibus bill that has nothing to do with the subject at hand.

Government Orders

It has basically said, “Here it is. Take it or leave it. It is a matter of confidence. If you vote against it, the government falls”. What has that done? It has scared the Liberals, who are against this measure, into having to either support the government and get what they do not want or cause an election. That is where we sit right now with this issue. It is a terrible spot that the government has put us in.

Would the member like to comment any further on this issue?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I see we share the same concerns about the hypocrisy of the Conservative government, which is using the budget implementation bill to introduce a measure that would end Canada Post's exclusive privilege to redirect mail.

This will lead to financial losses. Canada Post has estimated that it is losing between \$50 million and \$80 million a year. It is already losing that money, because remailers are already in business. Canada Post filed a lawsuit and won, indicating that it has the exclusive privilege to handle international mail.

Of course, Canada Post told us that if the bill were ever enacted—Bill C-44 at the time—it would suffer financial losses. This will probably pass, since the Liberals will support it. At least, that is what I predict will happen.

One thing is certain: the Bloc Québécois will vote against this bill. It is estimated that Canada Post will lose approximately \$45 million to \$50 million more if it loses the exclusive privilege to handle international remailing. By including this in Bill C-9, the government is removing Canada Post's exclusive privilege over international remailing. This is completely unacceptable because it is hypocritical, and it makes it impossible for us to have an informed debate, as Bill C-44 allowed us to do.

I hope the Liberal members will rise and vote against this bill, which will remove Canada Post's exclusive privilege to handle international remailing.

• (1520)

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join in the debate today. I will try to focus my comments mainly on a number of the rural aspects of the budget. My riding is rural, for the most part. There are a couple of bigger communities, Glace Bay and Port Hawkesbury, but for the most part, Cape Breton—Canso is rural. When I go from one end to the other, it is about a four-hour drive and there are about three traffic lights. That would give an indication that it is a fairly rural constituency.

Some of the concerns of the people from Cape Breton—Canso obviously have to do with the out-migration, the shift in population from rural to urban. Many of the issues are being experienced by many rural communities right across this country. What I see in the budget is a lack of initiative, a lack of understanding of rural Canada and how to deal with some of the challenges that are taking place in those communities.

I want to talk about the fishery first. I would like to speak particularly about a program the government brought forward. With regard to the lobster industry last year, it pledged some short-term

assistance. Too much fanfare, it announced \$15 million in short-term assistance to the lobster industry. As we know, with the economic downturn, many ports along the Atlantic coast saw a downturn in the price of lobster and crab. It was compounded by the fact that catches were down in many areas.

The government announced \$15 million in potential assistance for the fishers in these communities. We knew it was a fairly modest sum at the time, but what has compounded it was the criteria that were laid out by the government that made it almost impossible for fishers to receive any of that money.

I saw a cute sign the other day. I have been a Toronto Maple Leafs fan my entire life. I saw a big billboard out in front of one of the local bars in a neighbouring community that said, “Free beer for all Toronto Maple Leafs playoff games”. That is an easy pledge to make. It has been a number of years since we have been in the playoffs, so it is easy to boast the free beer.

This transitional fund for lobster assistance that the government put together is pretty much the same thing. It announced \$15 million for those who qualify, but when the criteria are made so abstract and obscure, it is very difficult for an average fisherman to qualify for such funding. We saw just barely over half of that money being allocated to those who really needed that money at that time. It was a very difficult year in the fishery.

I was in Port Hood this past week and had an opportunity to speak at the installation of officers at the Port Hood Volunteer Fire Department. A number of fishers were there from some of the harbours around Inverness County. I spoke with a group from Little Judique Harbour. They said their catches have gone down each of the last five years. The way the program was structured, very few from those harbours along the south side of Inverness County were eligible for any funding assistance at all.

Some fishers in Mabou qualified, but nobody qualified within Mabou Coal Mines. Just a little bit better than half of those funds were expended. It sounded like a good thing to do at the time, but I think the government really fell short in the delivery of any kind of assistance for the lobster industry and let down the fishers along the many harbours in Atlantic Canada.

Some of the representatives back in my riding, including Josephine Kennedy and Trevor MacInnis, said it seemed from the outset that the government was intent on making sure that not one of these full cheques was ever cashed. The maximum was going to be \$5,000. Of course, because it was taxable, about 22% would go back to government coffers. About 22% of the money that was issued to the fishers who needed it would be signed back to the government.

• (1525)

On average these fishers would have lost \$20,000 to \$25,000. For any small business operator, if \$20,000 or \$25,000 is taken out of that enterprise in any one year, that is a significant amount of money to take off the bottom line.

Government Orders

The reality is that there are very few other opportunities for these fishermen, when we look at the reduction of crab quotas in the gulf and the drop in the price of the crab. They are very limited in their ability to generate other revenues with any other species. They are expensive operations to run. Running a fishing boat operation has a great number of costs involved.

We thought it was a good idea at the time, but it was the execution of the plan that really fell short and disappointed many. It is not the only concern we have about the fishery with the government. We are on record, on a number of occasions, questioning the minister herself as to why she wants to meddle in some past agreements signed off by some ministers but is not willing to in other cases.

We can look at a crab plan that was signed off in 2005. The minister arbitrarily went in and changed the whole context of that particular arrangement. And yet the minister is not willing to revoke the privilege that was issued to Tim Rhyno, a \$1 billion licence that was issued by her predecessor, Loyola Hearn, just before the last election.

With respect to the lobster plan, as excited as we were when we first heard about it, the end result was something we probably expected anyway.

There are so many rural issues. The lack of attention that rural Canada got was stark. When the volunteer firefighters were speaking with me the other night, they said they were really hoping this was going to be the year that some recognition would be given for their efforts. If people come from Toronto or Montreal or Vancouver, a major centre, when they go to bed at night they are quite confident that their safety is in the hands of full-time firefighters, full-time professionals. In case of a tragedy or if a fire breaks out over the course of the evening, then full-time professional firefighters will attend them.

However, in rural communities, we all know it is volunteer firefighters. They are very dedicated, committed community members who put their own safety and their own time into making sure we are able to live in safe communities.

The volunteer firefighters were hoping that maybe in this budget there would be some type of recognition, maybe in the form of a tax deduction for volunteer firefighters. That was certainly absent.

I know that all members in this House hold in great esteem and admiration all people who contribute to their communities through volunteerism. The firefighters, the first responders, those types of volunteers stand apart from the regular hockey or soccer coaches or fundraisers for the local charities. It is these people who are rushing into the buildings when everybody else is rushing out.

The volunteer firefighters were very disappointed that there was nothing in the budget for them.

We saw cuts to CAP sites and cuts to ACAP. I know the Minister of Industry came back and said it was all just a mistake, that they did not really mean it and that they found some money for them. So the government will maintain those programs for at least one more year.

Now we see what is going on here, and I think Canadians understand. The government is just trying to sort of rag the puck through to the next election. It certainly does not want to see another

budget. It does not want to make it to another budget, because harsh decisions are going to have to be made after the situation we have sort of tumbled into under the guidance of the government.

• (1530)

Therefore I think we fully expect that an election will be triggered this fall. I think Canadians will understand that there were many opportunities missed in this budget, and they will keep that in mind when that opportunity presents itself, probably this fall.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to say at the outset that this is a rather one-sided debate. We have not heard from a Conservative member for the last two days on this matter.

When we are talking about an 880-page budget implementation bill, we would think they could at least get one member up who could answer some of the questions that we in the opposition have regarding the bill.

The Conservatives have a provision in the bill regarding the provisions of the Criminal Code, applying them to serious crimes relating to money laundering and terrorist financing, and they are going to apply them to cases of tax evasion, which is probably a good idea, but we need some answers as to what sort of application that would have.

Currently the government's policy on tax havens is that it is offering an amnesty. When the gentleman sold the computer records from one of the Swiss banks two years ago to the German government and to other governments and uncovered all these foreign nationals who have money squirreled away in these banks, what is the government's answer? The government's answer is, "We are going to give you an amnesty. Just simply walk into the nearest Canada Revenue Agency location and report that you have been hiding money in Switzerland for the last few years, pay your taxes and you will be scot-free".

This is the government's tough-on-crime approach to the tax haven issue.

I think we need some answers here. I would like to know what the member thinks.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona has asked a legitimate question.

It would have been good to have the current government engaged in this debate. Perhaps if it were engaged in this debate we could get some clarification.

The Conservatives make an investment in building more jails, but when they advertise that, it is social housing in their eyes. It would be good to have them stand and give an explanation on these various points, but I guess they have decided not to.

Still, the opportunity exists here today for us to engage in this. We can highlight those points and bring them to Canadians. I think Canadians appreciate the opportunity to be enlightened.

Government Orders

•(1535)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Cape Breton for his remarks and certainly his insight as he spoke of the situation with the fishery in his riding. I have spoken on occasion in the past with one of his constituents, Josephine Kennedy.

I want to ask the member about what is tabled in the bill as well as what has gone through the economic action plan. It is almost as if there is a strategy, a gamble, by which some people will be excluded from certain programs.

Specifically, the member spoke of the lobster program, which is a valid point, but we also want to talk about community infrastructure. The smallest of our communities are unable to take part in many of these initiatives, one being the RInC program, the recreational program that is 50:50. The smallest of the communities are unable to come up with their half of the funding. Therefore after being told they are approved for \$100,000, it is yanked from them, similar to the lobster program where the take-up was.

I would like to get the member's thoughts on where that money should be going, how that program should find its way through to the end, the lobster program, and also about the smaller communities in his riding.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, we have heard this time and time again from smaller communities.

My colleague, the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, represents a community not dissimilar to mine.

In these smaller communities, the tax base is limited. There is limited access to corporate dollars, where they can begin a fundraising drive and help with the community pool, the rink or whatever it might be. The communities understand it is essential and important to provide those recreational opportunities for their young citizens, but they are handcuffed and they are limited.

Therefore I would think, if the government were serious about trying to help rural and smaller communities, there should have been an envelope of money available for those in those special situations.

In many cases the province plays a role. We see in the bigger centres that the corporate sponsors and the fundraising initiatives are more easily accessed, but in smaller communities—

The Deputy Speaker: On debate, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it will be no surprise to you, since we opposed the budget presented a while ago, that we will oppose its implementation for a number of reasons. I would like to discuss a few of them. I know that I have ten minutes and I will try to highlight as many as possible. At any rate, the Bloc Québécois has a whole host of reasons for objecting to the implementation of this budget.

First, the government has decided to spare rich taxpayers with the result that the middle class and the working class will pay for a good part of their budget in the end. I have a number of examples.

The Bloc Québécois had asked that people making more than \$150,000 per year pay an additional 2% in taxes in order for them to contribute their fair share to debt reduction and permit the government to function. They have the means to do it. We had also proposed an additional 3% tax on income of \$250,000 or more per year. The government did not accept this proposal. Yet, these two measures would have contributed \$4.8 billion to the public treasury. The government decided to ignore the Bloc Québécois proposal.

The fact that the rich can cash in their stock options and pay tax on just half of the income costs the government \$1 billion every year. We know who this government is choosing to support. It is certainly not the people who, day after day, have to live on minimum or average wages. They will be the ones filling the government coffers, and not the rich who, I believe, have been given many favours.

There are also the big organizations. The banks and oil companies are, I believe, the most important organizations in Canada. This budget does not make them contribute. These banks are allowed to continue sending their profits to tax havens. Big oil companies are allowed to continue benefiting from tax loopholes, even though they do not make the required contribution to the public purse.

The government's focus is clear. It is protecting those with more money and the big organizations that make a great deal of money and it is asking the middle class and small taxpayers to make the largest contribution to the tax base.

The government's use of the employment insurance fund is an example of a great injustice. In 2008, a separate bank account was created for the board. The government has just closed that account and created a new one called the employment insurance operating account. I remind members that this fund owed \$55 billion to workers, the very workers who pay into it, and also to the small and medium-sized business who pay into it. As a result, with the creation of this new account, the slate was wiped clean. We can forget the \$55 billion that has been stolen from EI over many years. We will never see it again. It disappeared into the government's current accounts, and that is that.

What is worse, the Conservatives are prepared to plunder another \$19 billion from that fund themselves by 2015. This government is just like the previous Liberal government in this respect. Instead of paying back those who overpaid or relaxing the EI rules to help benefit those who need it most, especially during these tough economic times, the government has emptied the account.

The same goes for women and the status of women file. We saw absolutely nothing for women in this budget or its implementation act. Not only is the government not reopening the Status of Women offices that were shut down, but it is also allowing other injustices to continue. Incidentally, I am currently in talks with the government regarding preventive withdrawal.

Government Orders

● (1540)

In a supposedly forward-thinking society, why are women in federally regulated jobs not eligible for preventive withdrawal? That is not the case in Quebec. Women in provincially regulated jobs are eligible for this benefit. Because of the federal labour code, thousands of women are forced to either continue working or claim employment insurance benefits, which penalizes them.

The Quebec system is generous: women receive 90% of their net pay during preventive withdrawal. If their jobs are hazardous, they can stay home and take care of themselves. That is not how it works in Ottawa. Their income drops to 55% because they have to rely on the employment insurance system. If a woman claims employment insurance benefits too soon, she will not be able to stay home for as long after her baby's birth.

Women make up 52% of voters, yet they are a completely neglected segment of the population.

There are other elements with which we disagree, such as support for the forestry industry. The government gave \$9.6 billion to Ontario's auto industry, but just \$177 million to the forestry industry in Quebec and British Columbia. It is clear that the government's priorities do not lie with Quebec. This is extremely unfair to Quebec.

The same applies to the aerospace industry. Quebec's aerospace industry amounts to 55% of Canada's aerospace industry. There are figures for the industry's economic benefits. The government is no longer supporting Quebec's aerospace economy. It is giving out military contracts here and there, contracts that represent huge sums in the aerospace industry, sums exceeding \$16 billion. The government recognized the critical mass of Ontario's auto industry, but it did not do the same for Quebec's aerospace industry. Right now, businesses are not getting enough funding from the federal government.

The federal government's support for Quebec's forestry and aerospace industries is negligible compared to its overwhelming support for Ontario's auto industry.

The same is true when it comes to the environment. We see where the government's interests lie. Creating a carbon exchange is out of the question. Yet it would be very easy to bring in such a measure. Nor does the government want to restrict the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the big oil companies, which, as we know, are its darlings. Not only is this harmful to the environment, but the government is losing out on the money it could levy from big oil companies, which can afford to pay. We are coming full circle, and it is the middle class and the poorest citizens who contribute the most to the tax base.

Nor can we forget the guaranteed income supplement. For several years now, the Bloc Québécois has been calling for the guaranteed income supplement to be paid automatically to the people who qualify, rather than telling them they have to apply for it. People can be cheated out of it for several years, yet the retroactivity applies for only 11 months. The money given to these people would go right back into the economy, since they are a poor group of people.

I could go on for some time, because the budget contains 50 or 60 points that we do not agree with. I outlined five of them here today.

For these reasons and all the other reasons I have not had time to mention, the Bloc Québécois will vote against the budget implementation bill.

● (1545)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member made a fine speech on the budget implementation bill. Canada's chartered banks last year made a profit of \$15.9 billion. This is in a recession when people are suffering. They made \$15.9 billion and the government obviously does not think that is enough because it is lowering the corporate tax rate.

Let me say what the bank presidents earned last year. The Bank of Nova Scotia CEO was paid \$9.7 million. The Bank of Montreal president was paid \$7.45 million. The CIBC president was paid \$6.6 million and the top earners of \$10.4 million were the presidents of RBC and TD Bank.

The G7 and the G20 have come up with corporate compensation guidelines and the government is dragging its feet as far as adopting those guidelines. I would like to ask the member whether he thinks it is high time that the government should follow the guidelines of the G7 and the G20, and implement them to put some kind of controls or curbs on corporate pay in this country?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague.

It is time for the government to get involved and tell the chief executive officers of large corporations that they must admit their salaries are too high.

They could go one step further, and I spoke about it in my speech. People making more than \$150,000 could pay an additional 2% in taxes, and those making more than \$250,000 could pay an additional 3%. This measure, along with the salaries of directors of those large corporations my colleague is talking about, would add \$4.8 billion to the public coffers.

But there is more. We are talking about the profits made by big banks, but these profits are often invested in tax havens, evading the government's control. And the banks are then able to evade paying their fair share into the public treasury. It is scandalous and they have to be brought into line.

● (1550)

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the province of Quebec, back in the mid-sixties to late sixties, played an incredibly large role in this country in regard to establishing government pension securities through the CPP-QPP negotiations and the establishment of that program. I state that because many of the social policies that were very progressive came out of Quebec around that time and continue to do so.

Government Orders

I wonder if Quebec likes the idea that is being talked about in a recent edition of *Policy Options* magazine. A couple of its authors pointed out that one of the best ways to go forward with secure pensions from the public sector is to allow individuals to volunteer, to make a supplementary payment into the Canada pension plan itself so that they could take advantage of it when they turn 65. It is a policy idea that is being initiated in Great Britain and other countries in Europe. I wonder if the discussion in Quebec has been toward that as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, additional contributions to pension programs are extremely important. However, it does pose a problem, one I have seen. When federal pension plans generate a surplus, the government often claims that the surplus belongs to it. Instead of reinforcing the pension plan with the accumulated surplus, the government tends to take this surplus or a part of it.

It is true, my colleague said it: a lot of good social policy ideas come from Quebec.

Earlier I gave the example of preventive withdrawal for pregnant women, and that is just one example. Normally, Quebec's social programs are much more advantageous, as are pension plans, such as the government and public employees pension plan, a solid plan with benefits that total 70% of the average of the employee's five best years.

In my opinion, we could give people the opportunity to contribute more to their pension plans, while ensuring, however, that the government does not dip into these pension funds.

[*English*]

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with a certain amount of frustration followed by anger that I rise to speak to the budget when I look at the negative impact this budget is having on my province of Newfoundland and Labrador, indeed all of eastern Canada. I want to zero in specifically on a few items and dovetail on some of the issues brought forward by the member for Cape Breton—Canso.

When we look at what is in the budget, there are a lot of things that could make someone very frustrated, but what makes one very angry is what is not in the budget. This is going to be one of the most difficult, absolutely impoverished years in the fishery that we have had on both coasts.

On the Pacific side, in British Columbia, as a result of the Fraser River sockeye decline and the unexpected, drastically lower returns, we not only see what little is left of the commercial harvest of sockeye salmon on the Pacific, we also see that the fishery for our aboriginal and first nations users, our sport enthusiasts and our outfitting industry is absolutely decimated.

Salmon is to the soul of B.C. what cod is to the soul of Newfoundland and Labrador. People in B.C. are experiencing first-hand the very same turmoil, the same deep experience of anxiety that Newfoundlanders, Labradorians and Atlantic Canadians felt in 1992 with the collapse of northern cod and Atlantic cod stocks. The people of B.C. are hurting.

What has the government done? Absolutely nothing. There is absolutely no plan in place. Granted, the Cohen commission is now studying the issue. I am not expecting any results in terms of specific recommendations for several years, but here is what we do know. Right now there are people in B.C., first nations, sport outfitters and commercial operators that are hurting. We do not need the Cohen commission to come out and say that it would be a responsible move to assist those who are facing negative economic impacts as a result of sudden drastic declines in that precious resource all Canadians share but is unique and very special to B.C. There is nothing in this budget, absolutely nothing.

On my coast on the eastern side, this past year the harp seal hunt basically has been shut down, not through the actions necessarily of Pam Anderson or any of her like, but the reality is that as a force of nature, ice conditions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and in the front are significantly limiting the opportunities to prosecute that age-old economic mainstay first created by the Europeans to feed their need for oil to light the street lamps of London.

The largest seal hunt that will occur anywhere on the globe this year ironically will occur in Europe. In Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Iceland, Germany and Sweden, there will be a massive cull. The largest hunt in the world will be in Europe and it is all sanctioned by PETA, the IFAW and all the rest of them. When people want to make a contribution to any of those organizations, they should remember that they are supporting the cull of seals in Europe, but I digress.

Let us get back to the issue, which is that in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Gaspé, the Magdalen Islands, P.E.I. and other places, there is no real commercial hunt under way because of a force of nature. A lot of money will necessarily be lost by our commercial seal hunters for this year. We would expect that the government, if it stands with sealers as it suggests that it does, would bring forth some sort of assistance. There is none.

In New Brunswick and Quebec, in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, the crab industry just faced a 63% cut in crab quotas, 63% in one year. I do not know how much members know about the fishery, fish or science, but I can tell them this. Any person understands that when a minister cuts a stock by 63% in one year, there is a failing of one of two sources. Science may have failed to detect the decline over the last number of years and failed to provide the proper advice. There cannot be a 63% decline in one year. Science may have failed to detect a gradual decline that was occurring over the last number of years.

● (1555)

Of course, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is responsible for conducting the science, so either DFO failed to do its fiduciary responsibility and engage in the necessary science of that stock, or the minister failed to act on the policy requirements of that stock over the last number of years. It is one of the two. Either science failed us all and the minister, or the minister failed each and every one of us and especially the fishermen who depend on her leadership to manage the stock in an appropriate way.

Government Orders

We cannot have a reduction of 63% in one year without some fundamental catastrophic cause. I do not think there was any fundamental catastrophic cause. What I believe happened is that science provided a certain amount of advice to the minister that said this stock was in a certain amount of trouble, and over the last number of years when that advice was being provided, the minister failed to act on it.

Those who prosecute that resource, those who depend on it and depend on its stability, those who depend on the leadership of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans are right in asking for some sort of economic compensation for a failure in leadership either from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans itself or at the policy level from the minister who neglected her fundamental fiduciary duty to do the right thing over a period of several years.

Tens of millions of dollars will now be lost, over \$80 million to the province of New Brunswick alone. This is a federal government responsibility. It is not the responsibility of the provincial government. It does not set quotas. It does not initiate the science. The province of New Brunswick has absolutely no capacity to intervene whatsoever on the decisions of the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

It is absolutely abundantly clear to each and every one of us that the federal government must intervene. The people of New Brunswick, the people of Quebec, those whose livelihood depends on this particular resource, those who bring in tens of millions of dollars in export opportunity are depending on the federal government. All of the crab is exported to the U.S., Europe and Asia. All of this resource is a fundamental mainstay of the rural and coastal communities throughout that particular region.

What does the government provide? What does the budget provide? Nothing. The government does not even acknowledge that it is the root cause of the problem. The government tries to slough it off and suggest the provinces somehow have a responsibility, even though the provincial governments have no capacity whatsoever to make any decisions when it comes to the management of the resource itself.

As the member for Cape Breton—Canso alluded to earlier, we have the issue of the area 23 and area 24 crab. The minister said in no uncertain terms that the previous minister's decision to allow Tim Rhyno to overturn the decision of the independent advisory council, to overturn the recommendations of departmental officials, not one individual was able to rise to the top, get to the former minister and be allocated a multi-million dollar crab licence by bypassing the entire process. The current minister says that is perfectly acceptable because sometimes ministers have to take the responsibility, have to right a wrong.

Yet the minister is proposing a fisheries act in which she says that should never be allowed to happen, that the decisions or recommendations of independent advisory panels should be adhered to regardless, that the minister should have no say. The minister is becoming the greatest advocate as to why this House should never ever vote for her own act. Her own act is basically an act of her asking us to please protect her from herself.

We have the situation of another former minister, the member from Halifax, who basically brought in a management plan that said that crab should be shared on a fair and equitable basis with a 50:50 split. That was the management plan. The present minister came in and tore up the entire plan and said that she needs the right to be able to do so because she needs to right a wrong. She said that if she gets her act passed she will never be able to do it.

This budget needs to be changed.

• (1600)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member at the outset for all his help last year in promoting the air passengers' bill of rights, Bill C-310, which is still alive after all this time, thank goodness.

Last year the member will recall we had an emergency evening session in this House in which we debated the actions taken by the European Union to ban seal products while I believe the Europeans themselves were engaged in some culling process of the seal population.

What is the current status of that European boycott that we debated last year?

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, the government was totally inoperative and useless in actually avoiding the ban. It is still scheduled to come into effect this coming fall. Quite frankly, it is going to be devastating to the entire industry.

The member is quite right to point out that certain exemptions were put into place. The largest seal hunt in the world in 2010 will be conducted in the European Union. Every Canadian, every activist, needs to understand that when the ban came into place against Canadian seal products, the exemption was in circumstances where a cull was required. In other words, to protect certain commercial activities, whether it be salmon sport fishing or other things, if a seal is at the mouth of a river, then go ahead, it can be eliminated. Why? Because Sweden, Austria, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Iceland, a lot of northern European countries as well as central European countries, are actively engaged in seal culling.

The only difference is they do not harvest the seal for a commercial purpose, taking its hide, its meat, rendering it into very rich omega-3 oils, which is very important to the nutraceutical and the medicinal industries. They do not manufacture the goods into clothing. They do not use the material for food sources, as a protein source. They let the animal sink to the bottom. They kill it and for no commercial purpose in mind. I say to people to give their money to PETA, give their money to the IFAW, give their money to the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, support the cull in Europe, because that is exactly what they are doing. It is totally irresponsible.

I want to thank the member for his support in this initiative.

• (1605)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a lot of the member's concerns are my concerns, as we are neighbours both by land and by sea.

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With regard to one of the comments about sealing, I would like to point out that in haste I think what happened in Europe was that members of the European Parliament rushed ahead with what they thought was an issue winner for all of them. They wanted to be more relevant in the eyes of Europeans. I think in some cases the voter turnout for a member of the European Parliament averages less than 10%. They just wanted to be relevant and they rushed ahead with this, overriding some of the suggestions made by the experts in Brussels.

Speaking of Europe, my colleague spent a lot of time on the issue of what concerns us off the coast. Of course we have the co-management regime on the high seas outside of our 200-mile limit. All international agreements were supposed to be brought to the House for vetting and voting, as was said by the minister originally. That story sort of changed because we did have a vote. We turned down the amendments to the current agreement of these countries on the high seas and then we found that the next day the government ratified.

I would like my colleague to comment on the seriousness of allowing some of these agreements in the House but yet not so serious.

Hon. Gerry Byrne: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is quite right that we do share a certain passion for these issues. He is quite right that there has been absolute hypocrisy on the government side in relation to the matters of international fisheries management.

We did indeed have a very lengthy debate, a prolonged debate, as decided by the government because it refused to actually allow the debate. It just kept it going and going, thinking the issue would go away. We forced the issue on the floor of the House of Commons as opposition parties, as the Liberal Party of Canada showing its leadership on this particular front. We brought it to a vote. We expected the government to honour the will of Parliament. Twenty-four hours later, it ratified the deal anyway. It is disgusting.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we have been debating Bill C-9, a number of things have come to our attention.

As my friend from Winnipeg has shown, the depth of these 880 pages is a bit of a doorstopper. In the document, we see things that we normally would not find in the budget. We have seen this as a pattern with the government.

When there are things the government has not been able to get through the House in other ways, they are stuck in the budget. This is not just with this particular document, Bill C-9, we also saw it with the previous offering from the government, Bill C-10. We can remember when there was actually a bill to deal with censorship. That clearly was not a money concern of Canadians, but it was a way for the government to include things that it could not get through the House previously.

Here we go again. We see things in this bill that have little to do with the financial concerns of the country. We can look at further stripping environmental regulations, dealing with Canada Post and remailers, and issues that clearly have purview in other areas, and we find the government stuffing them in a budget bill. Why is that?

I could critique the government's adherence to its own principles around transparency and accountability, but we have seen that fall of the table recently so perhaps that is not a surprise. What it should indicate is very poor practice in terms of how budgets are presented. I think that is critical.

If we see governments after this one looking to this method, it is not really what Parliament is set up to do. It is not set up to have bills of this volume that have little to do with budgets but have everything to do with initiatives that the government could not get through the House in another manner.

We have the remailer issue, which was noted by my friend from Winnipeg, and the issues around environmental assessment, which my friend from B.C. noted. It means that the government is actually abusing the economic priorities of Canadians by inserting its own agenda.

When Canadians saw the government prorogue, they heard the government say that it needed to recalibrate and that it needed to hear from Canadians and get some ideas around what the priorities of Canadians were for this budget.

What was astonishing when the Minister of Finance rose and presented his budget was how little there was, notwithstanding the volume of the document, in new offerings. What we saw was a continuation of the government to deregulate at a time when the world economy was looking at re-regulating. We saw the same offerings in terms of corporate tax cuts at a time when people were saying that the government could not afford to hand out corporate tax cuts because it would be too hard on our fiscal commitments and that it would further the period in which we had to climb out of the debt and deficit.

People started to wonder what the government was doing during that period of prorogation because it certainly was not listening to Canadians. What we were hearing was that Canadians wanted to see us reinvest in things like infrastructure, and not in the way the government has done but in infrastructure that would allow Canadians to actually deal with the economic crisis they are facing in their households.

Things like affordable housing are a no-brainer. If the government invests in affordable housing, it creates jobs and provides people with what they need, which is affordable housing, reducing the costs in their households and, in fact, making our communities more liveable and sustainable.

We know that if the government had looked at a long-lasting retrofit program that actually used the investments from the federal government to make transitional changes in our economy, we would have had retrofits not only to private homes but to public institutions, as well as greening our grid and the way we distribute energy in this country. We could have seen not only the creation of jobs but the greening of our economy.

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●(1610)

We did not see that. We saw an abandonment of even some of the small offerings the government in previous years had offered in terms of retrofits where people were able to make their homes more energy efficient and environmentally friendly and creating jobs that would help us get to the next steps in terms of getting our economy on the right track. One is kind of aghast when looking at what the government offered and what it said it would do.

We had provided the government with some very smart ideas. Instead of taking the corporate tax cuts that the government has presented to corporate Canada, which, by the way, has not taken the government up on the offer and reinvested in its own capital, we thought it made sense to put it in smart targeted investments.

If we look at other jurisdictions, that is what they have done, be it provincial, state or other countries. They have said that if infrastructure dollars are going to be put on the table, there should be some sort of test that is met. The test should be whether it will be helpful to the economy in general. In other words, will it create jobs? Will there be a ripple effect?

Anyone who has looked at the greening of the economy sees the ripple effect. When there are investments in things like retrofits, alternative energy and greening the grid, not only is there the initial impact of the dollars invested but there is a multiplier.

Manitoba did a great job in the last decade and continues to do so to this day. It invested its infrastructure money into conservation and into greening their buildings and infrastructure. Because of that investment, Manitoba was able to bring down its dependence upon hydroelectricity, which, as we know, is the export of hydroelectricity, because it saw the benefit in terms of conservation. It took the surplus it had and exported it.

One of the dilemmas, however, notwithstanding the work that Manitoba did in terms of conservation and ensuring that it preserved the energy it had and had extra energy, is that when it sells its surplus energy there is no place to put it in terms of an east-west grid and Manitoba ends up sending it south. That benefits the northern states, and Manitoba will sell the energy because it obviously has to sell it somewhere and it benefits its treasury, but what Manitoba and the NDP have requested for years is to have an east-west grid in this country.

I do not have to tell the House that the fabric and skeleton of this country, when it was created and conceived of, was the national rail system, which obviously required public infrastructure investment. Here, in the 21st century, we need something similar to that, which is why an east-west grid makes sense. The NDP has campaigned on this three times. It is a smart thing to do but, alas, the government did not do that. We see south of the border that the Obama administration is saying that the thing to do is to green the grid.

At the end of the day, things like affordable housing and green collar jobs that we could have been investing in are lost. Not only that, but the meagre offerings the government offered before are gone. Instead, we have corporate tax cuts, the shredding of environmental oversight and, at the end of the day, a budget that is not in the interests of Canadians or my constituents and, therefore, something I and my party cannot support.

●(1615)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see that the hon. member has focused on one very important issue, which is that the budget does not address a vision of where Canadians see themselves going, both domestically and internationally. I am sure that he, like all other members of Parliament, have been receiving information, postcards, lobbying and pressure from all kinds of groups like the Group for Development and Peace and their Life Before Profit campaign.

They ask one simple thing. They ask the Government of Canada to demonstrate that it has a vision of responsibility throughout the world. Since we will be hosting the G8 and G20, they are asking, and I wonder if the member for Ottawa Centre would be in agreement, that we put pressure on the government, because it seems to be susceptible to very little else, to increase support for small scale, sustainable agriculture in the global south.

Mr. Speaker, you come from an agricultural community, and agricultural policies should be and ought to be guided by the principles of food sovereignty. Hunger and poverty can be reduced by giving priority to small scale farmers, to local production for local markets and other needs for the future.

The member will know that current agricultural policies support industrial agriculture and threaten food sovereignty of people everywhere—

●(1620)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, that is the problem with the budget. We do not see innovation or the kinds of commitments that organizations like Development and Peace want to see, like sustainable agricultural.

In the eighties I was involved in development and in sustainable agriculture. Since that time, we have seen that it works, if we look at the multiplier effect, as I referenced before, in terms of the investments.

The government does not seem to be looking forward at all. It seems to be mired in its own ideology and it seems to lack any understanding of the consensus, particularly on issues around development in the south. It is really important that we look at sustainability and do not always go for the big goal. The big goal has put us into problems in terms of international development. We saw that throughout the seventies and into the eighties. We need to look at sustainable methods, small farming, and that is exactly what the budget did not do.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from my perspective, this budget was all about what was not in it or what was taken away rather than what actually was in the budget implementation act. I think, for example, of the taking away of the federal environmental assessments, which the member spoke to eloquently. The only thing it did not take away, unfortunately, was the \$6 billion in corporate tax cuts.

When I think about the opportunity cost of that, I think about the poor seniors in our country. They are the ones I am hearing from in my office. For a mere \$700 million, we could have raised the GIS to lift every senior who is living in poverty out of poverty; \$700 million for seniors as opposed to \$6 billion for corporate tax cuts, when we have one of the lowest corporate tax rates and certainly lower than in the United States.

First, does my colleague agree with me that seniors should have been a high priority in this budget or should have been mentioned for that matter?

Second, as an advocate for the Nortel workers in particular, would he share his thoughts on workplace pensions and what we could do in the House to better protect them?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for the work she has done to fight for seniors.

The choice was clear. We could have invested in supporting seniors by putting in a measure that could have been easily done to ensure that when companies go bankrupt, the workers who actually created the wealth, who allowed those executive to get the big bonuses, would actually be referred to in some way. All the government had to do was change the BIA. It could have changed two pieces of legislation and that would have been done. The Nortel workers who have been left out in the cold would have been recognized. Finally, it was about \$700 million versus \$6 billion. The equation is clear. The government should have at least invested the \$700 million for seniors and their pensions.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join the debate on Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill. Ten minutes is not long enough to address the 880 page document, a document so omnibus it makes one wonder if there could ever be enough allotted time for that debate.

Last month, I debated the government's wasteful expenditures and I spoke to the shortcomings of the budget: the lack of a job creation strategy; no investment in early childhood development; no national child care plan; no affordable housing strategy; no pension reform; no national vision or legacy; and after having invested \$50 billion in infrastructure spending, no real jobs. The bottom line is there are no real benefits for Canadians and nothing has changed.

Bill C-9 would do nothing to address these concerns. In fact, it confuses the matter even more. What is worse is the underhanded and sneaky insertion of amendments that deserve their own independent worthy consideration and their own debate.

Instead of dealing with the real problems facing Canadians, the Conservatives are ignoring the cries for job growth and job creation. Over 300,000 Canadian jobs have been lost and Canadians remain out of work. The budget offered no solution to compensate for lost jobs or for the 8% of Canadians who are unemployed, or a staggering 11% of Mississaugans. To inflict further pain, the Conservatives will impose a \$3 billion job-killing small business tax. Even the CFIB reported that this measure would kill more than 200,000 jobs.

Today, however, I want to concentrate on the government's underhanded tactic of inserting amendments into the bill. Let us be clear. These amendments are not sellable as orders in council or

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regulation changes. These proposed changes merit their own introduction and their own debate.

As the Liberal critic for crown corporations, I would like to focus on part 15 of this omnibus bill. The Conservatives' steps taken toward the deregulation and the privatization of our crown corporations are vivid and they are clear. I quote from part 15:

The exclusive privilege referred to in subsection 14(1) does not apply to letters intended for delivery to an addressee outside Canada.

This would not be the first time that we have seen an amendment to the Canada Post Act. It is not even the second. It is the third time. Since 2007, the Conservative government has been unsuccessful in trying to pass the same bill that would eliminate Canada Post's exclusive privilege, the first step toward deregulation of an \$80 million industry.

At least the first two times, the bills were given their fair share of independent debate, but never passed second reading. The unexpected election of 2008 put an end to Bill C-14. Six months into the next session the government introduced Bill C-44, with the exact same wording. The unexpected prorogation put an end to that bill as well. Once in 2007, again in 2009 and now most recently in 2010, the Conservatives seem transfixed on the road to deregulation.

My colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Elmwood—Transcona have misspoken the facts. My party has never introduced legislation on remailers. They should do their homework and stop misleading Canadians. They have misinformed Canadians on at least two occasions and I want to correct the record.

The Conservatives, however, continue to fight dirty with trickery, chicanery and underhanded tactics probably hoping people will not notice. Well people have noticed. Canadians have noticed. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers, CUPW, has noticed. It too knows the drill. When such a large and omnibus bill is tabled, there are many issues that do not get a full and proper debate. I quote from a CUPW release:

It appears that the federal government has grown impatient with the democratic debate that accompanied earlier bills and is attempting to ram deregulation of international letters through Parliament by attaching it to a budgetary bill.

That sums it up. The federal government has grown impatient. It is ignoring the democratic debate process and ramming the deregulation of our crown corporations down the throats of Canadians. The government has lost touch with Canadians.

As the Conservative agenda continues to push for deregulation and privatization, it threatens Canada Post's ability to provide affordable, accessible and universal services for residents across Canada. In 2004 the Ontario Superior Court ruled that Canada Post had the legal right to exclusive privilege of both domestic and international mail.

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● (1625)

Canadians still value a stamped and sealed envelope which carries strong sentimental messages for their most special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, funerals or other holiday occasions. Canadians value the affordability as well of our postal system. Our country has one of the lowest basic letter rates, at 54¢ per stamp, whereas the U.K., Japan and Germany charge 70¢, 80¢ and 90¢ respectively.

What do the countries with the higher rates have in common? Each one of those countries have deregulated its postal industries.

As the Conservatives continue to push for privatizing parts of Canada Post, they also threaten the delivery to higher cost regions, such as remote and rural areas. With the one price policy, Canadians know that sending a basic letter from Ottawa to Montreal is the same as sending a letter from Halifax to Vancouver, from Iqaluit to Point Pelee.

However, Canada Post reports that the reserve market of letter mail, representing nearly half the company's revenue, is steadily declining. The parcel industry alone reached \$10 billion. Canada Post holds 12% of that market. Canada Post boasts the capacity to be a major leader in direct marketing, but now it only maintains close to 10% of this growing industry.

Even in the international remailing market, Canada Post stands to lose \$40 million to \$80 million. This lost opportunity is one the government should not give up on. However, with the Conservatives when trouble looms, privatize. Privatization is their motto.

In July 2006 the minister responsible for Canada Post at the time stated in a letter to CUPW:

The activities of international remailers cost Canada Post millions of dollars each year and erodes the Corporation's ability to maintain a healthy national postal service and provide universal service to all Canadians.

Since then, that has changed. In 2007 the Conservatives tabled Bill C-14 to modify the exclusive privilege of Canada Post Corporation so as to permit letter exporters to collect letters for transmittal and delivery outside Canada. Inserting an amendment to Canada Post Act in the budget is underhanded and blatant trickery. This is another example of the Conservative Party's iron curtain of transparency at its best. The week Bill C-9 was introduced was a bad week for Canada Post and a bad week for Canadians.

The Conservatives' attempts to deregulate and privatization did not stop with this sneaky Canada Post amendment. In the same week they announced the slashing of 300 Canadian jobs in Edmonton, Winnipeg, Antigonish, Fredericton and Ottawa. The jobs come at the expense of privatizing Canada Post's call centres. The call centres will obviously be outsourced to overseas markets. This guarantees 300 Canadian jobs lost as a result of this announcement.

Union after union complains that the Conservatives do not care. Again, when trouble looms, they privatize. Public Service Alliance of Canada spokeswoman Janet May told CBC News that "the changes are part of a broader effort by Canada Post management to move the company further toward complete privatization".

In a press release the other week, PSAC, the largest union of its kind said:

Canada Post is in its 15th year of profit...“So to an average Canadian, does it make sense that part of your postal system is getting privatized?”

No, it does not and PSAC is correct. It goes on:

The union said it also worries about the loss of people's privacy if they have to offer up personal information to a private company—especially if the call-centre work is outsourced to a U.S. company.

The list of opponents to the deregulation and privatization goes further. There are other groups that are impacted as well. Organizations representing the blind are concerned. Right now Canada Post offers free mailing of Braille documents and sound recordings. Opening up the market to unfair and unlevel competition would inevitably result in slashing services in order to compete. Senior citizens on fixed incomes need to know that they have reliable access to affordable mail services to suit their needs. Canadians everywhere depend on universal access to reliable postal service.

If it is necessary to radically alter a fundamentally Canadian industry owned by our taxpayers our, citizens deserve a full committee analysis before the current government potentially deprives so many residents. Canada Post can rightfully claim to be one of Canada's most trusted brands in Canada and its services have connected our expansive land. Canada Post must serve all Canadians, regardless of economic ability or geographic location, ensuring that all citizens are valued and have an equal opportunity to the services that the state provides.

The Conservatives have created a slippery slope that threatens this very premise.

● (1630)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to hear the Liberal member is firmly onside in opposing the deregulation of Canada Post. I do take issue with the fact that she suggested that I had said the Liberals introduced a bill to do the same thing. I said no such thing yesterday. I did suggest that the notion of starting down this partial deregulation did start with the Liberal caucus when it was in government, and I stand by those comments.

The Liberal member for Mississauga—Streetsville spoke about her opposition to the changes to Canada Post. Could she assure me that she and all of her Liberal caucus colleagues will be here when we vote against the budget? The only way to stand up against something in the House is to be in our seats to vote against it.

The three opposition parties obviously have enough members to defeat this budget. If she really believes the changes to Canada Post must be defeated, could she tell the House today that she and all of her Liberal colleagues will be here on the day of the budget vote to defeat it?

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● (1635)

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Speaker, I am quite certain I was present for the debate when the member for Hamilton Mountain stated correctly into the record that a previous Liberal minister had introduced the bill on remailers. I wanted to correct that statement.

I am in no position to take any lectures from the member on voting against a budget that I oppose. Certainly, the NDP was responsible for bringing down the Paul Martin government. As a result, we do not have national child care. We do not have the initiatives on Kelowna or Kyoto because the NDP did not support the Paul Martin government.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud my colleague's intervention and the very clear and eloquent fashion in which she pointed out some of the deficiencies of the bill. It goes beyond sneaky that the government would place its agenda in a bill that is 880 pages long and not its vision, as my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville has rightly pointed out.

There is no vision, no sense of purpose and no sense of direction. There is no purpose to government in that 880 page document. It is a cut and slash, privatize, eliminate government from the life of Canadians type of document. There is very little there that one could say represents a step toward the future or a step toward a more expansive Canada, one where citizens and communities take care of each other and develop a format or procedure whereby individuals and government interact. There is none of that at all.

However, we are immediately going to have government members saying that we voted for this, that it is in the budget, that it is in the book. Remember that humorous little skit "It's in the book? I do not know whether it can tell us where it sees a vision of Canada in those 880 pages. What line would it refer to? Where in that book do we find protection for Canadian jobs, for stimulating Canadian jobs and for providing a future for Canadians?

Maybe my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville can tell us whether that is empty rhetoric and garbage in that 880 pages or whether it is a document worthy of any consideration.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Speaker, I would concur. It is absolutely 880 pages of empty rhetoric. There is no investment in jobs. There are no jobs, no job creation, no protection for the jobs of today and no creation of the jobs of tomorrow. There are no investments in education, national child care, R and D, innovation or employment insurance. There is no lasting vision or legacy.

We will have nothing to show for \$50 billion in infrastructure spending that is lasting. That is even if we are certain that \$50 billion will have been invested at the end of the day. We all know the stories about the lapsed money, the money that is committed but is never actually spent or sent out.

The Deputy Speaker: I have two points of order. First, I will go to the chief government whip on his point of order.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, during the debate tonight on the motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, the Chair shall not receive any quorum calls, dilatory motions, or requests for unanimous consent; at the end of the time remaining for the debate, or when no member rises to speak, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence on a point of order.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, members in this place often get carried away with the intensity of debate, but I know that my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville probably wanted to put a cap on everything that she said by saying that this is a government of squandering and spending and tax—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member has been a member of this House longer than I have and I know that is not a point of order, but a continuance of debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

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● (1640)

[Translation]

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.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak about the implementation bill for the Conservatives' March 4 budget. This is my opportunity to inform my constituents and the people of Quebec about the negative impact many of these Conservative budget measures will have on our social and economic well-being.

I already had the opportunity to speak to the budget in the House and to point out the Conservatives' serious lack of compassion and desire for social justice. The current budget implementation bill naturally confirms that the Conservatives are more determined than ever to protect wealthy taxpayers and to make the middle class pay for the budget deficit. Furthermore, the Conservative government has reaffirmed its intention to plunder the EI fund and to begin the process of privatizing Canada Post.

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This privatization is particularly worrisome to me and to my constituents, especially the people of Saint-Mathieu-de-La Prairie, because the future of their postal outlet remains uncertain after months of endless talks and discussions regarding the renewal of the local postal concession.

We need to remember that the current government introduced Bill C-44 in June 2009 to take away Canada Post's exclusive privilege concerning international mail. Fortunately, this bill died on the order paper when the House was prorogued, but the same measure is now included in the budget implementation bill. This is still more proof of how devious this Conservative government is and how it wants to completely deregulate the crown corporation.

The Bloc Québécois strongly opposes the privatization of Canada Post to any degree. The crown corporation must remain a public concern in order to maintain universal services and consistent rates throughout Canada, including in rural areas that are threatened with losing this essential public service.

On another note, in denying the huge socio-economic challenges that more than half of Quebecers have been grappling with since 2008, the Conservatives are showing a total lack of compassion and vision. Seniors and women are the notably missing from this budget implementation bill, which contains nothing to improve the guaranteed income supplement and nothing to promote pay equity. Clearly, this government is continuing to take an arrogant attitude toward the less fortunate. This disdain for the more vulnerable members of society is especially hard on older workers, who are left in the lurch by the Conservatives' 2010 budget.

What does the budget the Conservatives brought down on March 4, 2010 have for older workers? Nothing. Yet for years the Bloc Québécois has been calling on the federal government to bring in a new income support program for workers 55 and over who cannot be retrained and who are victims of massive layoffs.

There will always be workers who cannot be retrained, and they need an income support program. In its 2006 throne speech, this same government promised to create such a program by adopting a Bloc amendment that called for an income support program for older workers. What has happened since? Absolutely nothing.

On October 28, 2009, there was a vote on the Bloc Québécois' Motion M-285, moved by my colleague, the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour. Only the Conservatives voted against the motion. Older workers still do not have access to a proper program for older worker assistance. The Conservatives are ignoring them and they are among those who have been left out of this budget, which is utterly lacking in compassion for society's poorest.

The Conservative government would rather maintain generous tax measures for banks and big corporations than help the people who were hardest hit by the recent economic crisis. In response to the crisis, the Bloc Québécois submitted dozens of proposals during its pre-budget consultations, such as bringing in a heavy tax on the excessive bonuses that some companies give their executives. We would like to see that kind of heavy tax along with a measure preventing companies that pay such bonuses from deducting those expenses from their corporate income taxes.

●(1645)

The Conservative government is refusing to consider these measures even though Quebecers have said that they fully support them.

The one thing that this bill and the budget it seeks to implement make absolutely clear is that Quebec has nothing to gain from remaining in the Canadian federation. The bill does not include a measure to compensate Quebec for harmonizing its sales tax even though Ottawa has already agreed to generous compensation for all of the other provinces.

The Conservatives have also turned down Quebec's urgent requests for more federal transfers, particularly for education. In fact, as a percentage of GDP, primary transfers from the federal government to the provinces for health care and social programs will decline between 2010 and 2015.

The Conservative government is also sticking with its decision to unilaterally cap equalization payments. No doubt it believes that the vast majority of people do not really understand the issue.

I would like to briefly explain the concept of equalization for the benefit of my fellow citizens.

First of all, I should point out that Quebec's current government considers this to be an extremely important matter, so important that it discussed it at length in its latest update on federal transfers published in the March 30 budget plan.

What is equalization in Canada? It is simply a means of distributing a portion of federal revenues in order to reduce the socio-economic inequalities between the provinces. Like many other federations around the world, Canada's federal government created an equalization program in 1957 to try and close the fiscal gap between the provinces.

The money paid out by the federal government comes from taxes paid by all taxpayers, including taxpayers in Quebec, who finance their share of federal equalization.

This was how Canadian equalization functioned until just recently.

Now let us take a look at some of the myths circulating about how Quebec unfairly benefits from this program. As the Quebec government has said, some people are claiming that Quebec has always benefited substantially from the equalization program, which is nothing more than a transfer of wealth from one province to another. But it is a program paid for exclusively by the federal government and all Canadian taxpayers contribute to it. Residents of Quebec, through their taxes, pay their share of equalization, as do all other Canadians. In fact, out of all the provinces that received payments last year, Ontario is the only one that received a smaller equalization payment per capita than Quebec. Quebec is not unfairly benefiting from the equalization program, far from it.

Government Orders

Others claim that Quebec is able to fund its innovative social programs such as daycare and pharmacare because of equalization money. They also claim that this money comes in part from Alberta's tar sands development, insinuating that it is the Alberta oil industry which enables Quebec to offer generous social programs. Quebec finances these innovative social programs on its own.

Equalization certainly plays an important role in Quebec's budget, but it does not use that money to fund its visionary social programs. Quebec taxes its citizens more than the national average, specifically to fund its programs, like the \$7 a day child care program and drug coverage. This political choice simply reflects our collective desire to create a Quebec, a society that is more equitable. Quebecers have opted to give themselves public services and they finance them themselves through higher taxes, which they pay to the Government of Quebec.

Quebec could have fewer social programs and lower taxes, but it would receive exactly the same amount in equalization payments. So Ottawa must reverse its decision to change the equalization formula and give back to Quebec the money it is entitled to. It must eliminate the equalization cap and treat Quebec fairly and equitably, taking its water resources into account in the equalization formula.

In light of everything in the bill, the Bloc Québécois cannot support it.

• (1650)

Accordingly, we will vote against the bill.

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for my hon. colleague regarding equalization payments. I am not quite certain as to how she envisions the formula. Is it purely on a per capita basis regarding Canada's social health transfer, or is it something a bit different that would allow building upon that formula?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Currently, Quebec receives \$1,111 per capita in equalization. Prince Edward Island receives \$2,400, New Brunswick, \$2,226, Manitoba, \$1,673 and Nova Scotia, \$1,452.

Quebec and Ontario are the two provinces that receive the lowest equalization payments per capita under the current formula.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was particularly interested in what the member had to say about the provisions in Bill C-9 regarding the removal of Canada Post's legal monopoly on outgoing international letters, or the remailer situation.

Members of the House know that this bill was introduced on two previous occasions as Bill C-14 and as Bill C-44. The government was not able to get either one of those bills passed through the minority government. The government has taken advantage of a situation and it has simply added this bill, totally unrelated as it is, to an 880-page budget implementation bill. It has nothing to do with the matter at stake. One wonders whether the government has a wish for defeat and an election, whether that is what it is doing.

I have seen this before. The Filmon government in Manitoba did the same thing in a similar minority situation. Every year it would bring in a big omnibus bill like this, throw in a whole bunch of surprises and dare the opposition to call an election. If that is what this is all about, then let us call a spade a spade.

The government is trying to privatize Canada Post by stealth. This is just the thin edge of the wedge. This mail is going to be sorted in places like Jamaica, where the wages are a fraction of what they are here. Once the remailers get peeled away, it is only a hop, skip and a jump from there to when the entire postal corporation gets turned over to private hands, as part of the privatization of crown assets program.

We are on the same side as the Bloc on this issue. The Liberals are saying they support where we are going with this as well. This whole business has to be exposed. The fact that in the last two days no government members have stood up to speak to their own bill says volumes about what is happening in this House.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

This omnibus budget implementation bill provides for the dismantling of Canada Post. In my speech, I described this budget as a very devious move by the government. This is not the first time the government has tried to dismantle the postal system, which should be an affordable universal public service.

I presented numerous petitions from people in my riding protesting against the attack on Canada Post by Bill C-44, as it was called at the time. This bill outlined how services would be dismantled, starting with remailing, as my colleague just said. We know that this is just the thin edge of the wedge and that the government will go after postal outlets next.

Last fall, the government declared a moratorium, saying that it would not touch postal service, but it did not keep its word, because in Saint-Mathieu-de-La Prairie in my own riding, it is closing postal outlets in a roundabout way.

The government always does things through the back door, by stealth. What it cannot do directly or indirectly, it does another way. It has Canada Post in its sights in the budget.

• (1655)

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate on implementation of the budget presented on March 4.

First of all, I believe that this is not a good budget for Canadians because it does not address the issues we are currently facing. It is a laissez-faire budget, the budget of a government that steers a course depending on which way the wind is blowing. This is a facile and lacklustre budget, one devoid of ideas.

Government Orders

I will repeat my comments made on March 4 after reading the budget. I said that this budget offered nothing new, that it was a budget “that did not propose any specific measures to create jobs or encourage research and development...Given that it took three months to recalibrate his government, it is far from impressive.” I am still waiting for this recalibration.

Not only has the Conservative government proposed freezes and cuts, it has put forward a budget that is extremely misleading. Let me explain.

As the member for the National Capital Region, I am very concerned by what is in and what was left out of the budget with respect to the public service. A large part of the labour force in our region works in Canada's public service and its agencies. At the same time that the government is leading the population to believe that its budget will create jobs and support economic growth, it is announcing that it will make departmental cuts. It is not creating jobs, it is cutting jobs.

A few days after the budget was presented, the President of Treasury Board proudly announced that the government would not fill the 245 positions on government-appointed boards and commissions that were deemed redundant. However, he was hiding two partisan secrets. The first is that 90% of these positions were already vacant, and some of them had been for some time. Therefore, where are the savings announced with such pomp?

The second thing the government was hiding is this: the very same boards targeted for cuts were filled with 79 Conservative donors, volunteers and candidates since the last election.

The government was again trying to control the boards. As I said at the time, if the scandal at Rights & Democracy is any indication, this government will stop at nothing to ram its right-wing, ideological agenda through boards that should be professional, not political. By filling boards with Conservative cronies and axing other positions entirely, it is cementing its stranglehold on power while wiping out the potential for dissent.

We have now seen that the government has stopped at nothing to entrench its right-wing ideology and to claim that it was saving money when it was not spending any in the first place.

The Minister of Finance even went so far as to buy a coffee at the taxpayers' expense at Tim Hortons in London, Ontario. He hired a private plane for a return flight at a cost of \$4,575, but flew back on a commercial flight at a cost of \$400. In other words, he spent \$5,000 to get a cup of coffee.

The government is completely out of touch with the reality Canadians are living in. On one hand it claims to be reducing expenses and making cuts, but on the other hand it is squandering public funds.

The Conservatives claim they can develop budgetary strategies and attack the deficit. I do not believe them. They do not even know where to begin to make cuts in government expenditures. They have delegated this thankless job to their officials, claiming that the cost-cutting will not hurt all that much.

Let us not forget that the government plans to put its fiscal house in order, specifically by cutting \$17.6 billion over five years. How

does it intend to do so? By freezing departmental budgets and reviewing programs? It was this same government that granted salary increases to its employees: 1.5% this year, 1.5% next year and 1.1% the third year. How will the departments absorb the cost of inflation?

• (1700)

I strongly believe that the government will have to make cuts to services, and that taxpayers will end up paying for these cuts.

The government should have the guts to tell us now which programs it plans on cutting.

Will it cut the programs that are not in line with its right-wing ideology? History shows us that programs it does not like will surely be on the chopping block.

Even the former clerk of the Privy Council, Mel Cappe, admitted to a journalist at *Le Devoir* that public servants could find ways to cut costs, but that it would affect the quality of services.

The two major public service unions are worried. The Public Service Alliance of Canada said the following in response to the budget:

Management will likely propose layoffs and job cuts to deal with the budget freeze. Our union will fight any cuts and any proposed reduction in workforce.

So much for peaceful labour relations.

Although the Conservative government will not reduce public service pensions this year, the President of the Treasury Board is refusing to be pinned down. Will he admit that his government intends to dip into the public service pension fund later on?

The government was certainly counting on the retirement of public servants to offset the government's administrative costs.

However, the recent report of the Clerk of the Privy Council and cabinet secretary mentioned retirements, and I quote:

Compared to the previous year, the public service retirement rate declined slightly in 2008-09 (by 0.1%), after steadily increasing...between 2004-05. Projections for the next several years call for a slight increase followed by a level retirement rate, assuming a stable employee population.

What I understand from this is that the government cannot count on an increase in retirements in order to reduce its workforce and rejuvenate the public service, while also hoping to meet its objective of reining in its expenditures. Will public servants who are eligible for retirement be reluctant to quit their jobs sooner in order to take early retirement? This could be a show of their lack of faith in this government.

This government did not hesitate to freeze the operating budgets of all departments while it wastes—I repeat, wastes—taxpayers' money on partisan advertisements and fees for consultants.

Government Orders

And this government was awfully quick to take credit for the reinvestment of \$32 million this year, even though it slashed \$148 million in funding for research councils in the last budget.

Instead of investing in research and innovation, the Conservatives refused to let the Canada Space Agency spend \$160 million in approved spending over the past two years, but want to take credit for adding \$23 million in this budget. What a farce.

Furthermore, the budget contains nothing to give a boost to Quebec: not a single word about culture, nothing on climate change or renewable energy.

It offers too little, too late to help the forestry and manufacturing sectors, which have been abandoned by the Conservatives.

After years of undermining the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, which could have helped create jobs locally, the Conservative budget allocates a pitiful \$29 million over two years. Once again, this is too little, too late.

This government is a tired government that does not know how to respond to the issues of our times.

We, the Liberals, are determined to create a better choice for Canadians. We are proposing clear measures for employment and pension plans, because we are the party that defends the middle class, seniors and families that are just trying to get by.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his presentation today. I know he did deal with issues about the government freezing the civil service and advertising wildly as it has about how great a government it supposedly thinks it is. But the fact of the matter is we are dealing with the biggest recession since the Great Depression. What did the current government do at that time? It brought in initiatives to lower the corporate tax rate even lower than it is right now, which is already 14 points or 15 points below that of the United States.

This is at a time when the five biggest banks in Canada made \$15.9 billion profit last year, which evidently is not enough for the current government, at a time when CEOs of these banks are earning in the neighbourhood of \$10.4 million, in the case of RBC and the TD and \$6.2 billion in the case of CIBC, and I could go on with the figures for the other banks for the members.

At this time, we have the G7 and the G20 that has developed guidelines to deal with corporate compensation. The question is, when is the current government going to adopt those guidelines? The indication is that it is not going to because the banks have convinced the government that those guidelines are too onerous and that it should let these executives keep earning what they are earning right now.

It is impossible for me to ask a member of the government because, for the last two days, we have not seen one. We have not seen a speaker for the government on its 880-page bill.

So, does the member agree with me that the current government should do something to rein in these corporate salaries and corporate packages that are just totally rampant in this country?

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments and his question.

It is true that the government is clinging to its right-wing ideologies, and the member has every reason to believe that the Conservative government wants to lower the corporate tax rate yet again. I have nothing against lower corporate tax rates, but the government needs to consider the fact that we cannot afford them right now.

That is why the Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada made his party's position clear a few weeks ago, indicating that he would freeze the corporate tax rate, and that the money would be put towards other programs, and particularly towards bringing down the deficit and the debt.

But the government continues to waste taxpayer money on a shocking number of advertising minutes. Ads for the government's economic action plan are all over the television. It is ridiculous. This spending is unnecessary, and the government keeps doing it.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence greatly desires to ask a question, so I thought that I would cut the hon. member off to allow a brief question.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that my colleague was talking about gassillage. As I said earlier on, this is a government that is determined to be known as a squander and tax punitive government.

Do members know that every one of these 880 pages in Bill C-9 is costing every Canadian taxpayer \$60.2 million a page? And do members know what they are getting for it? They are going to get something that they did not expect: \$1.5 billion in additional taxation for security. At the same time, the government is going to withdraw services. It is going to withdraw police services from airports, so that it can pick up another \$16 million.

I wonder what my colleague has to say about that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. He is much more eloquent than I could ever be. But he is right, and I will give some examples.

In my riding of Hull—Aylmer, which is on the other side of the river, there are federal government office buildings. This government put up posters about repairs in the buildings, when the posters cost more than the repairs themselves. That is wasteful.

● (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Merv Tweed: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During an answer in question period today I commented on the contents of a committee report from a public meeting which had not yet been tabled. I wish to withdraw my comments and apologize to the House.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: The House appreciates those remarks.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with some pleasure and frustration that I enter into this debate today on Bill C-9. It has been referred to by many of my colleagues as being quite a substantial bill, consisting of some 880 pages.

It is up to us as members of Parliament to attempt, for the average Canadian citizen, a translation or interpretation simply because it is clearly not an expectation for Canadians in their leisure time to read through examples such as on page 416, where it states:

Tariff item No. 7320.10.00 in the List of Tariff Provisions set out in the schedule to the Act is amended by replacing—

It is up to us as parliamentarians to interpret what Bill C-9 actually means in the lives of Canadians. When we in the NDP look through this bill, we find that in fact the government needed so many pages because this bill is, in reality, a Trojan Horse. Within these pages are all sorts of actions the government has taken that it did not actually want to debate in the full and proper light of day. There are many examples.

This from a government, if we recall the Conservatives' election win the first time around in 2006, that was going to bring in new accountability. We have in Bill C-9 nothing but unaccountability to Canadian taxpayers. I will provide some examples.

One is the Environmental Assessment Act. The willingness of the federal government to assess the environmental sustainability or impact of major industrial projects has been stripped down to virtually nothing in this bill. The number of projects that need to be assessed by the federal government so that Canadians can understand their impacts are too numerous to mention in the brief time I have.

Canadians have a sense that one of the roles and functions of government is to protect them from harm, particularly to protect them from projects they may have no knowledge of or nothing to do with. We are talking major industrial projects, oil sands, energy, bridges, highways and all the rest.

In Bill C-9, this Trojan Horse, the government has said it will simply defer to the provinces or, in other circumstances, will give the power to the Minister of the Environment to decide what should be assessed and what should not have an environmental assessment. The irony of this new move is that the minister will somehow determine beforehand what is going to have a major environmental impact.

Canadians know the reason an assessment is done is to find out if something is going to have an environmental impact or not. The minister is somehow being given this divine knowledge and right that he will understand what is going to cause harm to the environment and what is not before the project has even been proposed or implemented.

A second piece is the selling of AECL, Canada's nuclear industry, also contained in these pages, without debate or comment from members of the government. Here they are, the great defenders of the nuclear industry, trying to sell off that same industry, which begs a

few questions. Will they bring that in a separate piece of legislation, a bill which is required by law? No, they stick it in a Trojan Horse, threaten the opposition and get the support of the Liberals to do it. Something they could not do in the full light of day they bury in 880 pages. They bury something that Canadians, over the 50 years of AECL, have contributed \$50 billion toward.

It staggers the mind that the government would say it is going to selloff a Canadian asset, but it does not want to talk about it. It is going to selloff a Canadian asset that by law says it has to be brought to this place as a stand-alone bill and the government buries it on page 556. This is not a government of accountability, clearly not.

There is the environmental assessment, the burying of AECL, and the raising of taxes at airports. Of course, this is a government that likes to proclaim it is lowering taxes, but here we see it raising taxes, user fees that will garner a 50% increase. A 50% increase for security costs on travellers is also buried within this Trojan Horse of a bill. Are Canadians being asked for their comments or opinions about a tax hike like this? Of course not.

Such was the case when the government raised taxes with the HST, also contained within Bill C-9. The HST will be applied to a whole bunch more services that Canadians use, thereby raising their tax burden again. This is Orwellian at its base, hypocritical at its source, and the government must be held to account.

•(1715)

This is what the debate is about. It is ironic and yet tragic. Government members are so proud of their record on taxes and on this budget, which supposedly is the miracle cure for the recession, yet 93% of the projects did not get out the door. Another 50% showed no effect, and if we believe the Fraser Institute, it actually may have been counterproductive to the economy's recovery.

The government that claimed so much credit for its economic prowess will not stand up and debate the bill in this House. The Conservatives will stay in their seats and type their emails, but will not engage in a debate about something so fundamental. There must be something in these 880 pages that they like.

I found something that may be of some benefit to Canadians. I am somewhat of a fan of the credit union movement, and if I take one moment to give some small modicum of credit, the government decided to finally allow Canadian credit unions to compete and operate under the Bank Act, which will allow them to go beyond their limited provincial jurisdictions right now. This is something that has been called for by New Democrats for a long time. Credit unions will now be able to compete fairly and competitively with the banking system. We just heard my colleague from Manitoba talk about the exorbitant salaries that senior bank officials pay themselves continuously. These banks just received, not a year ago, a \$75 billion backstop from the federal government through Canadian taxpayers.

Government Orders

We can look at the HST. Being a member from British Columbia, I talk to my constituents in Skeena and the northwest of B.C. Just this past weekend I was in one of my favourite barbershops, which I know bears some irony itself, talking to my friend, Klaus Mueller Jr., the good barber of Smithers, B.C., asking him what the impact of the HST was going to be on his business. The HST was not debated, not discussed, and not presented forthrightly or truthfully, either by the Conservative government or the provincial government in B.C. It is devastating and the folks that he is most worried about are those that can least afford it, those who are already sitting on the margins economically of society.

Those on fixed incomes, seniors, those at the lowest incomes, struggling single moms, families, folks who are just trying to make ends meet are being whacked over the head by a government here in Ottawa that throws its hands up and says it has nothing to do with it, that the HST is purely a provincial decision. Yet, it found in a budget \$6 billion to bribe, in a sense, the provinces along the path of redemption on the HST route, thereby using taxpayers' money to bribe another level of government to raise taxes on the same taxpayers.

If this is not an offensive, twisted and contorted way to do politics, I have never heard of one. Taking \$6 billion of Canadians' own money from across Canada, which was a generous contribution I suppose from the other provinces to this nefarious effort, it shoved it out the door to Ontario and British Columbia, having them raise taxes on their own citizens and calling it good for the economy. All the while we hear this government trumpet its own ability to lower taxes when in fact that is not the case. We see in Bill C-9 880 pages of misdirection and misappropriation.

I want to step back and conclude my remarks around the environmental assessment component of this act because here is something that we will be paying for, for generations. Many of these issues and the damages being done in this bill will be felt for the next two years, but we know, through trial and error and through experience, that when we do not have proper environmental assessments, when we do not have any basic regulations to guide us on how major industrial projects operate, which is the suggestion in this bill by the government, we pay for it eventually. We pay up front or we pay eventually, and oftentimes, paying eventually means paying more.

An example and a case in point, in 2007 we paid \$175 million in the district of Yukon alone to clean up old mines, disasters, orphaned abandoned mines, because they did not go through any kind of environmental assessment 45 or 50 years ago. We are paying for them all now, collectively. This is not how Canadians want their house managed. Their affairs are not being benefited by the government.

We need to not have this bill pass. We need to not bring this Trojan Horse to bear because not only will we be paying for it now but for generations to come.

• (1720)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the hon. member has noted, despite the great number of members from the government side present in the House over the course of the last couple of days, that not one of them has

had the temerity to speak in favour of their own bill; 880 pages of no vision, 880 pages of imposition of taxes. We know there are going to be lots of taxes, because the Conservatives have to make up for having squandered, yes, I used the word “squandered”, the absolute legacy of surpluses they had, the lowering of the national debt, and now they have to make up for a \$53 billion deficit.

Through these 880 pages, they are going to charge Canadians \$60.2 million per page. Think about that, because the hon. member has referred to it as a Trojan Horse and there was disaster in Troy as a result of that Trojan Horse. The government side is too shamefaced to speak to a bill it presented to the public of Canada for consideration, the 880 pages of taxation. Squandering is their history and taxation is their future.

I wonder whether the member would agree that is their Trojan Horse.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, my colleague makes a fair point that the very foundation and principle of this place is that we engage in debate with one another. We present opposing views. We discuss those views and try to come to some reconciliation over what is best for the country. The fact is that the government members will not come to their feet, all the members present here today and the members present yesterday. Any of the Conservative caucus who feel so strongly about their government's direction failed to show up and actually speak and support that direction and present why they think it is a good idea to raise taxes on Canadians at airports, and why they think it is such a great idea to eliminate the federal role in environmental assessments over major industrial projects, and why they think it is such a good idea to have no debate whatsoever about selling AECL, for which we have all pitched in to the tune of \$19 billion.

If they thought all these things were such great ideas, here is the place for them to describe it, not in their cheap mail-out program, not in the stump speeches they give to partisan crowds, but here in the House of Commons where we all gather to debate these ideas and put our best foot forward. But I see again that, even through the enticement, none of our Conservative colleagues will rise to their feet to defend their government's action.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, several speakers have pointed out over the last two days that there are \$3 billion missing in tax havens. Seeing how the government is so desperate to get tax revenue and is supposedly a law-and-order type of government, one would think it would be taking some sort of action to try to recover some of the taxes on some of this money invested in tax havens.

What does the government do? It provides an amnesty so Canadians are streaming into Canada Revenue Agency offices over the last year declaring money they invested in banks in Switzerland. They are only doing it because an employee of one of the banks a couple of years ago took a computer back-up and sold it to the German government and made the information public. So now these people are running into Canada Revenue Agency under the amnesty program to own up to the fact that they were evading taxes all these years, and the government thinks that is acceptable.

Private Members' Business

I want to know when the government is going to get tough on people who take money and put it in tax havens and avoid taxes. When is the government going to get tough on them and live up to that claim of being tough on crime, which is certainly not what it does?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it should be tough on certain crimes, certainly not white-collar crimes, certainly not crimes that allow \$3 billion to go out the door when a government is running red ink all over the place. I would think it would want the \$3 billion, but it does not because it does not mind raising taxes, but on certain people, those who it does not necessarily feel are within its constituency. Now the folks who can afford to run these offshore tax havens, tax dodges, those are the folks in whom the Conservatives seem very interested. Compare this to the United States; it offered no such amnesty. It simply said it is going after the Swiss accounts to get the money back for the American taxpayers. In Canada, suddenly the Conservatives said, "Here is a haven", but if average Canadians missed their taxes by \$5,000, would they be provided a haven? Would they be provided an amnesty?

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, because this budget implementation bill contains nothing good for Quebec, it confirms the fact that the latest federal budget is fundamentally unfair to Quebec. I am thinking of the growth-generating economic sectors that receive more support in Ontario and the west than in Quebec. That is an understatement. I am also thinking of the sales tax harmonization that everyone but Quebec got.

I can hardly believe my ears when I hear the Prime Minister say in the House, without batting an eyelid, that harmonization did not happen in Quebec. On page 68 of his 2006 budget speech, the Minister of Finance said that five provinces had not harmonized their sales taxes, and Quebec was not among them. I am sure that everyone will agree that sales taxes have been harmonized in Quebec since 1992.

The Conservative government also seems to think that the Great Lakes make up a closed basin. It renewed the Great Lakes action plan for \$16 million over two years, but there is no money for the St. Lawrence. There is no long-term vision for this waterway, which flows alongside the riding of Verchères—Les Patriotes, where water, in the form of the Richelieu river, a tributary to the great river, and the St. Lawrence itself, plays an important role. That is why I am so disappointed and worried that on March 31 the St. Lawrence plan to develop an integrated vision and management strategy for one of America's largest waterways expired without any announcement by the government regarding its extension.

Part 15 of Bill C-9 limits the exclusive privilege of the Canada Post Corporation. I will not talk about this at length. People can refer to the speeches by my colleagues from Beauharnois—Salaberry and Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, who have spoken about this in detail. It is clear that the government is trying to avoid a debate on this subject in the House, even though it introduced Bill C-44 itself to study the issue.

Trying to eliminate certain exclusive privileges of Canada Post without debate, on the sly, quickly, through the back door, leaves us asking a tonne of questions. Our constituents are concerned about the services they are receiving from Canada Post. In my riding, a number of constituents are drafting petitions. Municipalities, such as the Lajemmerais RCM, have adopted a resolution calling not for the reduction of Canada Post services, but for the improvement of the services that have been cut and for the moratorium on post office closures to be maintained.

It is as the health critic that I would like to come back to certain parts of Bill C-9, namely part 18 on privatizing AECL. Nowhere in part 18 is there any assurance that the federal government will continue to take its responsibilities and provide Quebecers and Canadians with a supply of medical isotopes. Knowing the serious and unfortunate consequences of closing the Chalk River facility and the NRU to patients and health care providers, this is worrisome.

On November 23, 2009, Patrick Bourguet, President Elect of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine, came to speak to the Standing Committee on Health about a global approach to technetium. I wonder whether the budget and Bill C-9 will ensure international unity in order to prevent what we are currently going through. Therefore—

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Verchères—Les Patriotes will have six minutes to finish his speech the next time this bill is studied by the House.

It being 5:13 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

The House resumed from March 9 consideration of the motion that Bill C-475, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (methamphetamine and ecstasy), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-475. It is a bill that has been introduced by a Conservative colleague in the House, and I believe it is well intentioned.

The bill simply, but in a complicated way, attempts to zero in surgically on the proliferation of club and party drugs known as methamphetamines and ecstasy. The bill, in its two clauses, attempts to pinpoint persons who possess, produce, sell or import anything knowing that it will be used to produce or traffic in a substance referred to as the two drugs I mentioned.

Private Members' Business

I think there should first be context. We live in an age when the proliferation of new drugs, drugs that market themselves and drugs that are more easily manufactured than in times before, is upon us. We also know that it is no longer the growing of drugs, but the manufacture of drugs, that is a fairly easy proposition for those in the know and produces drugs of potency that can be calibrated. I do not like to use the word calibration very much on this side, but it is apt here. The calibration of the potency of a drug is much more precise in the chemical production lab than in the marijuana and poppy fields where drugs are traditionally known to come from.

We have a real epidemic of producers who, with very short learning curves in the production of drugs, can fill our streets, schoolyards and playgrounds with perhaps permanently mind-altering drugs at an affordable price in small quantities to be concealed. It is therefore the intention, I think, of my hon. friend to zero in on these club drugs.

I must say that in the four years I have been here, the Conservative approach to law and order has been to put more coats of peanut butter on top of the jam. We all know that peanut butter does not go on jam. It is not enough just to increase sentences. It does not make the criminal justice system work. This bill attempts to widen the net. It is not just another addition of a mandatory minimum. It is not just another hard penalty for a crime that already exists under the Code. We have had four years of that from the government.

It is important to recognize that this bill comes from a private member. It does not come from the government. So bravo; at least somebody on the backbench gets the idea that we can be surgical and at the same time improve the situation with respect to controlling drugs and substances, as the act says. He expands it by saying that no person shall possess, produce, sell or import "anything". Obviously, that thing is any element that makes up the drugs ecstasy or methamphetamine.

As this is to be sent to committee, we are saying we have to very carefully examine what that word "knowing" means. Of course, someone could have a chemical that results in the production of ecstasy. That chemical may in itself have a harmless use. It may be something that someone buys for agricultural, medicinal or cleaning purposes, but it is an element that in the end makes up the drug ecstasy. I will say ecstasy because I have an easier time saying ecstasy than methamphetamine. If it is part of that process, knowingly, this bill will attempt to insert itself into the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

• (1735)

If ecstasy is produced, the penalties are very precise. There is a maximum penalty, finally we are dealing with maximum penalties, which inherently has within it the long, four years or so, ignored principle, an importance of judicial discretion when giving out sentences. The government has ignored that for so long and, treating judges like schoolchildren, has said no, that it wants mandatory minimums. This bill treats specific offences with maximum sentences therefore protecting the idea that a judge in a certain circumstance could say that this was not a case that warrants the 10 year maximum in the case of having the elements that make up ecstasy and methamphetamines, and the sentence has been increased to a 7 year maximum for other drugs.

We need to look at the government's record with respect to controlled drugs and substances. For a couple of years it might have been good enough for the Conservatives to rail and complain that they did not have the keys to the castle and therefore could not do much with respect to drug awareness and the control of harmful substances but they have been in power for four years now. This is a pretty good bill but we need to look at it at committee to see if the intent aspects are covered, because no one in this House wants to make a law that looks good on the surface but will not be efficacious.

The law has to work, which is why it will be sent to committee, I suspect, and we will see if it passes the test of being upheld by the courts. What we have seen in the last few years is a real rush into a rash of laws that had not been necessarily tested. We certainly never had one charter opinion from a Department of Justice official tabled in any of the debates we have had with respect to law and order legislation.

I welcome the British Columbia member's bill. It will have a very hearty and thorough debate at committee. Overall, however, the government's attack on the harm that drugs can do to our youth has been woeful: increasing sentences and attacking the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Many experts say that increasing sentences for youth, particularly gang members, enticed into criminal activity, will have very little deterrent effect.

We need to examine the whole road map with respect to drug prevention and education. How do we get the people who are addicted to drugs off those drugs? What is the point of putting forward legislation that speaks to diversion to drug treatment courts, which are a very good thing and supported certainly on this side, when drug treatment courts in my riding, for instance, do not even exist? It is a diversion to nowhere. We are just finishing a budget debate. Where are the resources for the prevention of addictions and the treatment for addictions. That is the item that requires five or six days of debate in this country.

Everybody has had a family member who has had a dependency of some sort. Everybody in the House who has would know that it comes through treatment, education, awareness and resources in the community to attach oneself or one's family to those services that really help the fight on addictions in this community.

Many people who are involved in addictions and find themselves in the courts are victims rather than criminals. The more we can do to help the root cause of addictions, to get more people treated and to divert them to measures that are actually funded, the less we will need well-intentioned but surgical bills such as this one which only treat the disease, not the symptoms and only make society more overlaid with laws and not justice.

Private Members' Business

• (1740)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be supporting private member's Bill C-475 but I do have my doubts about whether or not it would actually do anything. I am left wondering if the bill would be effective or if it is more empty rhetoric with a tough on crime agenda from the Conservative government.

I wonder that because I do not understand quite yet why the existing Controlled Drugs and Substances Act is not adequate to deal with the issue that the member has brought forward since it already is illegal to produce, traffic or import methamphetamines and ecstasy. I am looking forward to hearing from witnesses to see what exactly could be done.

In looking at this bill for the purpose of debate, I would like to first consider other legislative and non-criminal options that are available to us.

Several states in the United States have moved to regulate these kinds of chemicals at the source, and they did not actually use criminal law. They used commercial and consumer regulations. A chain of information is created, tracking the sale of these chemicals and reporting to whom they were sold and in what volume. Anyone along that chain of purchasing has to do the same thing, so the chemical is resold in smaller quantities. The purchaser must list to whom the chemical has been sold and provide an explanation as to what it will be used for. It has been quite effective in restricting labs in the United States, so I wonder why we are not doing the same here in Canada.

Next I would like to talk about Canada's move toward the criminalization of drug use and the movement away from the treatment of drug use.

This bill and all the other drug bills that we have seen come through this House as of late all reek of playing into the fears of a public that the government is happy to keep uninformed about the realities of addiction and drugs in Canada, which continues a pattern of inefficient, ineffective and misguided policies.

Last year, the head of the Canadian Foundation for Drug Policy, Eugene Oscapella, said:

We've had 101 years of drug prohibition in Canada. All of the problems we have seen with drugs have occurred under this system. The solution is not to do more of the same.

I do agree with that.

The government has continuously rejected the idea that there are other options to addressing drug policy. For example, despite having the lifesaving success of harm reduction measures, such as needle exchanges and Vancouver's safe injection site Insite in reducing the spread of HIV and hepatitis C among drug users and increasing access to treatment, in 2007 the government introduced a new anti-drug strategy for Canada that removed all references to harm reduction, every one of them.

Instead, the government has put greater emphasis on law enforcement, back to tough on crime, moving Canada closer toward an expensive and failed U.S.-style war on drugs. In fact, just 3% of Canada's current drug policy budget goes to prevention, if members

can believe it, with over 73% going toward enforcement and, no surprise, drug use continues to rise. We are taking a page out of George Bush's failed U.S. drug strategy.

The government unilaterally changed Canada's drug policy to get rid of harm reduction measures. We know that "just say no" campaigns do not work. There are realities that we are not facing as a society that are really the root of drug use. I am speaking of realities like poverty, access to education, access to justice, non-judgmental health services, a lack of addiction services, education budgets that have been slashed and extracurricular programs that are quickly and continuously vanishing. We tell our youth to just say no but we give them very few options and very little information to actually make choices for themselves.

There are solutions that the NDP can get behind. I will start off with what we know about drug use in Canada. In 1994, 28% of Canadians reported to have used illicit drugs but by 2004 that number had gone up to 45%. These numbers tell us that a broad, holistic approach to the problem is necessary. We cannot just rely on putting people in jail. That is not a solution. The problem is much more complicated than that, so we need to look at what else is going on. A national treatment strategy is really an idea that we can get behind.

• (1745)

The National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada is a 2008 working group. Its members include not only federal and provincial health agencies, like Health Canada and Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection, but also related agency representatives from the Correctional Service of Canada, College of Family Physicians in Canada and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

This working group pointed out that research findings suggest that providing appropriate services and supports across a range of systems, so back to the holistic idea, not only reduces substance use problems but it also improves a wide range of outcomes related to health, social functioning and criminal justice.

Such a spectrum of services and supports is also a good investment for government because it returns economic benefits that far outstrip its cost. That is actually from the report of the working group. This group is calling for a national treatment strategy. It is a strategy that would include building capacity across a continuum of services and supports, supporting the continuum of services and supports, developing a research program and reducing stigma and discrimination.

Young people need to have access to realistic and useful information about resources. We know that children are encountering drug culture from an early age, so prevention and education should be just as aggressive as the sellers.

We want kids to make the right decisions but to do that we need to give them the tools. Similar to safer sex campaigns, education needs to include information about being safe if one is taking drugs, how to seek support if one has an addiction and not just a lot of commercials about the horrors of drugs.

I could certainly support any bill that looked at a four pillar approach to this issue. The four pillar approach has been successful in cities across the U.S., the U.K. and Europe. It is based on the four pillars of prevention that we have talked about many times here: prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement. All pillars are equally important and have to be integrated and jointly implemented to be effective.

In 2002, the House special committee on the non-medical use of drugs, the Office of the Auditor General and the Senate committee all called for: strengthened leadership; coordination and accountability with dedicated resources; enhanced data collection to set measurable objectives, evaluate programs and report on progress; balance of supply and demand activities across government; and increased emphasis on prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. We have seen that the four pillar approach has been approved and recommended by members of this place.

Our drug policies need to be based on research, not on public opinion. We should avoid legislation that increases the already imbalanced and overfunded enforcement approach to drug use in Canada without reducing crimes or drug rate use. Legislation really needs to address the problems of violent or organized crime and not in this patchwork way that we are seeing by the government.

The Conservatives are taking Canada in the wrong direction. This is a direction that is expensive, has no effect on drug use and will only increase the prison population creating a whole new set of issues, like overpopulation, health, safety and crime issues within the prison system.

Would the bill do anything? I am unsure but would it not be great if the bill would take a reality based approach to drug policy that is rooted in this four pillar approach? Would it not be great if this bill considered better and more prevention programs to divert youth at risk? Would it not be great if this bill looked at more resources for prosecution and enforcement of existing laws? Would this bill not be better if more officers were on the street as promised by the Conservatives but not yet delivered? Would this bill not be better if it introduced an overall coordinated strategy focused on gangs and organized crime? Would it not be better if it actually looked at toughened proceeds of crime legislation?

● (1750)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my hon. friend, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I am fully aware of his deep concern for the problems that methamphetamine and ecstasy inflict on Canadians. I commend him for drawing the attention of the House through his private member's bill to the complex difficulty caused by these drugs.

Unlike other better known drugs of abuse, such as heroin, cocaine or marijuana, crystal meth and ecstasy present some unique challenges. Both are synthetic drugs. They are not dependent on the cultivation of a crop. Their production requires no specialized

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skill or training. The precursor chemicals needed to produce these drugs are relatively easy to obtain and inexpensive to purchase. These factors make their production attractive to both the criminal trafficker and to the addicted user.

I will focus most of my comments on methamphetamine, but many of my observations also apply to ecstasy.

Crystal meth presents a threat to law enforcement authorities. Peace officers must combat both small toxic labs as well as super labs, which are primarily controlled by drug trafficking organizations.

The small labs produce relatively small amounts of methamphetamine and are generally not affiliated with major trafficking organizations. A number of factors have served as catalysts for the spread of small labs, including the presence of recipes easily accessible over the Internet. Indeed, widespread use of the Internet has facilitated the dissemination of technology used to manufacture methamphetamine in small labs. This form of information sharing allows wide dissemination of these techniques to anyone with Internet access.

Aside from marijuana, crystal meth is the only widely abused illegal drug that is capable of easily being produced by the abuser. Given the relative ease with which manufacturer cooks are able to acquire recipes and ingredients, and the unsophisticated nature of the production process, it is easy to see why this highly addictive drug is spreading.

Other factors which serve to spread the use of small labs include the availability of the ingredients needed to produce crystal meth. The ingredients are available in many over-the-counter cold medications and common household products found at retail stores. These items include rock salt, battery acid, red phosphorus road flares, pool acid and iodine crystals which can be used as sources of the necessary chemicals. They also include relatively common items such as mason jars, coffee filters, hot plates, pressure cookers, pillowcases, plastic tubing, gas cans and the like, which a clandestine lab operator can use in the manufacturing process for crystal meth.

Crystal meth use, production and distribution is regulated under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, CDSA. Production, possession, trafficking for the purpose of trafficking and/or exportation, and importation and/or exportation, with certain exceptions, are illegal in Canada.

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Law enforcement efforts to combat the methamphetamine phenomenon have been aided by two recent initiatives. Until 2005, crystal meth was listed under schedule III of the CDSA, a schedule that carries a lower level of maximum penalties for possession, trafficking, production, importing and exporting, from three to seven years. In August 2005, crystal meth was moved to schedule I of the CDSA. Under this schedule the maximum penalty for possession is seven years, while life imprisonment could be sought for trafficking, producing, importing and/or exporting, or possession for the purpose of export.

Precursors used in the manufacture of crystal meth are also controlled by the CDSA and the precursor control regulations. These regulations, which came into effect in 2003, gave tools to monitor and control the sale and/or provision, import, export, production and packaging of precursors frequently used in the production of illicit drugs.

As it currently exists, only licensed dealers may sell class A precursors, such as ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, except in small amounts in pharmaceutical products. A person found guilty of importing, exporting, or possession for the purpose of export without the proper authorization is liable to 10 years' imprisonment for an indictable offence, or 18 months' imprisonment upon summary conviction.

More recently, the precursor control regulations were amended to list red and white phosphorus along with other substances as class A precursors. As a result of this change, a licence is required to sell or produce red phosphorus with permits required to import the precursor into the country.

• (1755)

Crystal meth can cause serious health problems because it is powerfully addictive to those who use it and because it can cause harm even to those who are not involved in its use or distribution. Crystal meth both changes and damages the brain. Meth abuse can result in serious behavioural troubles, psychotic symptoms and dangerous medical complications, such as cardiovascular problems, strokes and even death. Crystal meth addiction is a chronic relapsing disease that is notoriously difficult to treat.

Dangers to health are not limited to those who use the drug. Those who suffer from the second-hand effects of crystal meth include victims of methamphetamine-related crimes: innocent children whose homes have been turned into clandestine lab sites; law enforcement officers and other first responders who work with the hazardous materials found at lab sites; and the environment, from the five to six pounds of toxic waste produced for every pound of crystal meth cooked.

The manufacture and use of crystal meth are not problems confined to Canada but ones that have spread to many regions of the world. In fact, the International Narcotics Control Board, INCB, noted in its 2005 report, "Precursors and Chemicals Frequently Used in the Illicit Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances", that the illicit manufacture of crystal meth is spreading throughout the world at an alarming rate.

Globally, the number of users of amphetamine-type stimulants, a majority of which use crystal meth, outnumber cocaine and heroin

users combined. There is an estimated 26.2 million amphetamine-type stimulant users in the world compared to an estimated 13.7 million cocaine users and 10.6 million heroin users.

Specifically, the INCB indicated that the illicit manufacture of amphetamine-type stimulants and crystal meth in particular is spreading in North America and Southeast Asia, but also increasingly to other areas such as Africa, eastern Europe and Oceania. The report further stated that the spread of crystal meth is due to the simple manufacturing process and the availability of the required precursors.

I believe that international co-operation is an important element in combatting methamphetamine or what we know as crystal meth. Some of the most significant and successful international efforts to combat crystal meth have involved a series of enforcement initiatives worked jointly between law enforcement in Canada and the U.S. from the late 1990s to 2003. These enforcement initiatives were principally responsible for the significant reduction in the amount of pseudoephedrine entering the United States for use in Mexican-controlled super labs.

The hon. member has proposed a bill which extends the operation of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. This bill would prohibit the production, possession and sale of any substance, equipment or other material that is intended for use in production of or trafficking in methamphetamine and ecstasy.

I want to conclude by stating that I commend the intentions of the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country and support the bill's principle of curbing the production and trafficking of crystal meth and ecstasy. These are very dangerous drugs and something drastic has to be done to prevent their sale and the second-hand effects on innocent people.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-475, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (methamphetamine and ecstasy), which stands in the name of the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I also want to express my appreciation for his putting this bill forward and giving us the opportunity to debate drug policy once again here in the House of Commons.

Let me say at the outset that New Democrats will be supporting this bill to get it to committee where it can be carefully examined once again. I say that even though I do have concerns about this legislation and the kind of direction it espouses and supports.

I do have very serious concerns about the criminal justice model of dealing with drugs in our society. I believe it has been a colossal failure, frankly. We need to be moving to a health issue model of dealing with drug use in our society. There are a lot of examples of how the criminal justice model has failed us. It has failed to deal with the problems of drug use in our society. It has failed to find any major improvement in that situation over many years of dealing with it.

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The parallels to alcohol prohibition are absolutely clear when we consider drug prohibition in our society. I have spoken at length about that in the House on previous occasions. When we take a careful look at alcohol prohibition and compare that to drug prohibition, we are going to see an exact parallel in terms of the kinds of social problems that were evident, especially in the United States during the period of alcohol prohibition.

Those problems have an exact parallel to the experience we have today under drug prohibition. Very basic things like grow ops in homes and the problems they cause to housing, the problems they cause to neighbourhoods were very evident in the 1920s during alcohol prohibition in the United States. People had illegal stills all over the place and caused serious problems, including fires when the stills exploded. The family dislocation for a crime that was considered illegal and, therefore, underground was very similar in the 1920s as it is today around drug prohibition and the stigma that goes along with drug use. They are things like the activities of organized crime. They are infamous. There are many stories about the organized crime activities related to alcohol in the period of alcohol prohibition in the United States, which have an exact parallel to the illegal drug activities that we see in our society today.

We have to carefully examine that. We have to look to the example that we have established with the policies on alcohol restriction, that we allow its use in our society and apply that to what we know about drugs. Indeed, other jurisdictions have done that already. Portugal is an excellent example of significant change and improvement in this area.

It is interesting that we are having this debate today because this afternoon I was able to meet with students who are visiting members of Parliament here on the Hill about the whole issue of drug policy. I met with two representatives of Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy. That is a national grassroots organization composed of student groups at secondary and post-secondary schools across Canada. The various chapters of Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy are encouraged to mobilize around drug-related issues that are important to their members and their communities. Their projects range from open peer drug and alcohol education, to public awareness campaigns, to lobbying MPs, as they were doing today. They were lobbying MPs for smart, sustainable, viable drug policies.

There is a chapter of Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy at Simon Fraser University in my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas.

One of the things the folks from Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy were asking today is whether I, as an MP, was ready for Canada to move toward honest and non-judgmental youth drug education. I was able to answer that with a resounding “yes”. They are doing an anonymous survey. They are keeping tally of what MPs told them. I am proud to go public and say that I do support the goals of their campaign around this and that I believe that honest and non-judgmental drug education is something that is absolutely crucial for youth in Canada.

• (1800)

When they talk about drug education and the kind of education and information that youth and young people need in Canada, they break it down into a number of categories. I want to go through some

of the documentation they have provided to show what another vision of moving toward a better situation with regard to drug use in our society might look like. They break down three categories in drug education. They talk about the need for honesty, the need for prevention and the need for a non-judgmental approach.

With regard to honesty, there are a number of side issues that they think should be covered. They believe it is important to talk about drugs as a serious issue, but they also believe we should do it in a way that does not exaggerate the negative effects that drugs and alcohol can have on an individual family or community. They believe young people, especially those with any experience of drug use, are aware of this because of their experience and intimate knowledge of that. However, they believe it is very important to create an honest, respectful dialogue so young people are given the opportunity to discuss these issues with their peers.

In terms of honesty, they also believe we need to make it clear that drugs are a part of life. It is undeniable. We use drugs in all kinds of different situations. It is not just illicit drugs in this case, but many other kinds of drugs are used freely and appropriately in our society. There is an important aspect of recognizing that. This is not about promoting drug use; it is a recognition of their place in our lives and in our society.

They believe it is important to point out that illegal drugs are not always dangerous and that legal drugs are not always safe. We know there is much abuse of prescription drugs and there is often much misunderstanding about the effects of these drugs. They believe this needs to be part of the conversation about drug use. It cannot always be on the one side around so-called illicit drugs. We need a broader appreciation of legal drugs that are available and used in our society.

They also say we should talk about use and abuse not being the same thing. Young people know, in any conversation about drug use, from their experience of how we use drugs and alcohol in our society, that there are ways to use them appropriately and ways to use them inappropriately. They know there is a difference between having a glass of wine at dinner and having a glass of wine at breakfast. They see adults and others making those kinds of decisions all the time and that approach needs to be part of the kind of conversation we have drug education.

With regard to prevention, they have a number of points in that general area as well. They point out that not using drugs is the only way to completely avoid the risk of drugs. Abstaining from drug use is the best way to avoid the individual risks of each substance and this has to be a key part of any discussion. We do not want to avoid talking about that.

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We also need to talk honestly about preventing problematic drug use. We have to recognize that often young people will do risky things whether we want them to or not, but we have to find a way to engage those young people who already take those kinds of risks. As part of that, harm reduction needs to be part of the conversation. We have to ensure that young people who make those choices know how to reduce the harm that they do, having made that decision. This does not necessarily mean encouraging the use of drugs. It means ensuring young people who make those choices have appropriate information. A lot of good work has been done in the whole area of harm reduction to make it very clear why this is a very effective strategy.

They also want to talk about delaying first use. For youth who think of using drugs, they believe it is important that drug education stress the importance of delaying first use in a non-judgmental fashion. If people make those decisions, they need to make them at a point in their life when they have the information at their fingertips and the background they need to make those kinds of decisions.

Finally, in their category of non-judgmental approach, they point out some things that should be fairly obvious to us. They point out that drug use is not a moral failing. They point out the need for inclusive and respectful dialogue. They point out the need for creating stronger peer groups. They say we keep safer sex, why not safer drug use.

There is a great approach here and I would hope we might pay more attention to this alternative approach to dealing with substance use in our society.

● (1805)

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-475 is about stopping the growing problem of crystal meth and ecstasy, two types of methamphetamines found all too frequently in Canada. The approach of this bill is to make a new criminal offence for those who procure the precursors of crystal meth or ecstasy with the intent to manufacture these drugs.

As the member for Kildonan—St. Paul has just so eloquently stated, these two drugs are highly toxic and addictive substances against which many informed people and agencies have railed, including several members of the House.

I thank my colleague, the member for Peace River, for introducing the original version of this bill in a previous session of Parliament. The bill attempts to attack the problem at its source, dealing directly with the precursors of these drugs.

I also thank the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his comments in the first hour of debate regarding the various substances that these drugs contain. As he stated, these include the primary ingredients of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, which are commonly found in the over-the-counter cold medications. They also include products not certified for human consumption, including acetone, rubbing alcohol, iodine and other common items. The member's comments highlighted the ease with which criminals could find the ingredients needed to create these products.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

I am proud to be a member of a government that has passed laws to reduce crime in Canada. We are not working for criminals but for the majority of Canadians who are law-abiding citizens.

In the previous debate of this bill, the member for Elmwood—Transcona expressed some concerns about pill compression machines. I have since discovered that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration regularly informs Canadian authorities of U.S. exports of pill compression machines to Canada. This American regulation, which does not have a Canadian equivalent, somewhat limits the illegal sale of the drugs we are discussing today.

[*English*]

The United States-Canada Border Drug Threat Assessment 2007, an analysis published jointly by the Canadian and U.S. governments, also notes that effective U.S. legislation restricting the purchase of precursor chemicals has been successful in cutting back cross-border smuggling of methamphetamines.

We need the provisions of this bill not only to allay the fears of our biggest trading partner, but more important to protect our families and our children.

Our research has uncovered many anecdotes about Canadians whose lives have been ruined by methamphetamines. One woman from the riding I represent, whom we will call Helen, a 34-year-old recovering ecstasy addict, tells us that she has been fighting her addiction for 15 years. This disease has taken many things from her, she says, such as her self-respect, her motivation and the ability to live a normal and fulfilling life. She confides that ecstasy has damaged her body and her mind forever. She has experienced severe psychoses, spent time on the street, been in abusive relationships and has done whatever was necessary to get the drugs she craved.

Helen tells us that one of the major problems is the ready availability of crystal meth and ecstasy. As we have heard in the House today and in previous testimony, the products needed to make these drugs are found at any big-box store or family hardware shop. Helen tells us there needs to be some kind of law regarding the distribution of the ingredients. She concludes, "We need help from our government to stop the selling of chemicals to the common person".

I stand in the House proudly to say that members of all parties are ready to answer Helen's call.

Outside the House, the list of supporters of this bill is growing too. Supporters include the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the B.C. Association of Police Chiefs, the Crystal Meth Society of BC, the town of Gibsons, the city of Powell River, the district of Squamish, the municipality of Bowen Island, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District and several other groups.

I thank my colleagues in the House, members of all parties, for their support of the bill. By their support, they join me in denouncing the scourge of crystal meth and ecstasy drugs.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 14, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

• (1815)

[English]

Mr. Rick Casson: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud tonight to rise in the House as the spokesperson for the New Democratic Party on digital issues, as the spokesperson on issues of culture, and as the representative of the great and massive riding of Timmins—James Bay.

The concurrence motion brought before us tonight is a motion that was adopted by the heritage committee. I have been on the heritage committee for six years. This committee works very well together generally. Bloc members worked with New Democrats and Liberals and the Conservative chair of our committee. We felt that this issue needed to be brought forward to the House to bring awareness to the situation. The motion is very similar to my Bill C-499, which I brought forward in the House two weeks ago. At that time I also brought forward Motion No. 506.

In some ways we are talking about a technical change to the Copyright Act. Some folks might question how much of the minutia of the Copyright Act needs to be discussed. This concurrence motion and my bill would bring forward a discussion about a principle, and that is what I am going to speak to tonight.

Basically, we are discussing the existence of the Canadian private copying levy, which has existed in Canada for a number of years. My Bill C-499 would update the Copyright Act to ensure that this great Canadian success story continues on.

We started to see the changing dynamics of the cultural scene. People had cassettes and were starting to make copies of music for themselves and for their friends. Artists were questioning where the copyright was in this. Copyright refers to the right to make copies. They were questioning who was allowed to make copies.

One hundred years ago it was a very simple thing to make a copy with a printing press. It was the same when records were made. I made a number of albums back in my younger days and to make the lacquer of a record is not an easy thing to do. It was an expensive investment, so controlling copies was very simple. Then technology changed and everyone could make copies. The whole question of where to go with copyright arose.

Canada came up with a compromise at that time. People knew that copying was going on. As a former professional musician, I would say that some of that copying was good because musicians certainly wanted other people to hear their music. Their fans wanted to hear their music. People made cassettes. The question was raised: How were artists going to be remunerated? The private copying levy came into being.

For every cassette that was bought, 5¢, 10¢ or 15¢ was put into a fund and that fund paid the artists for the copies that were being made of their work. When cassettes went the way of the dinosaur and we moved into burnable CDs the levy was extended. A problem came up with the technical gap. People are no longer making burnable CDs. Now everything is on the iPod and it can hold anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 songs.

Supporters of the levy and the artists fully expected the principle of the levy to be continued. This principle was supported by the Liberal government when in power and has been supported by two administrations of the Conservative government. It was felt that this was a fair and reasonable response. However, the Federal Court said the Copyright Act did not specifically identify music players, and we had to have a technical change to the act.

Today's motion for concurrence makes the House aware of the need to update the levy to take into account the technological changes. My Bill C-499 addresses the need to update the levy so that it applies to the iPod so that artists could continue to get paid.

I also brought in at the same time Motion No. 506, which proposes another technical change to the Copyright Act. My motion addresses the ability of students and researchers to access materials in their classroom, and to update the law and make it very clear.

Routine Proceedings

● (1820)

The Copyright Act is so burdensome in some ways because every time there is a new technological change a fight breaks out, and it creates some problems. For example, under the Copyright Act it actually says that it is legal to take an easel and a marker in a classroom and write a quote. That is a very fastidious approach to copyright, so the motion was to say we need, as technological change happens faster and faster, to be able to adapt to the realities and how people are using copyrighted materials so that people have access.

This is the issue we are here to talk about. It is not so much the technological changes, but the principle that if we are to have copyright in the 21st century, it has to maintain the traditional balance of copyright. Copyright has existed since the 1700s. It has been identified in Parliament after Parliament, in the United States, in Canada and in Europe, as a principle that the state accepts that authors have a certain control of their work, but at the same time, there is a public good to this work.

What good is the work if it is kept in a drawer and we cannot access it? The public good has to be allowed to have access to that work. That was the principle on which copyright was founded. We have seen numerous technological changes since the 1700s, but we are in a brand new environment in terms of the speed at which copying is taking place.

The other fundamental change that has happened since the mid-1990s is that, I would argue, almost everyone is in some way involved in copyright because students are copying materials, people are downloading songs, people are making their own projects, things that they technologically would not have been able to do.

We have two solutions to this dilemma. We can either continue to find ways to compensate artists and allow access, or we can try to shut it down, litigate and lock down. My Conservative friends live in a nuance-free zone. They tend to be tough on crime or fight the tax, so they have been in a bit of a schizophrenic, unsure position on where they stand with copyright.

For example, I was rather surprised when we talked about the levy and the fact that two Conservative administrations had supported the levy, which has been a long-standing principle, to see the Minister of Canadian Heritage denounce it as a job killer, one of those socialist schemes, a tax, and that the Conservatives would fight this tax.

He said that this was a real threat. Then he said that they would fight this tax every single step of the way. If one has to say everything one knows about copyright in 140 characters or less, one could say this levy is a real threat, but I was somewhat flabbergasted that a levy, that a principle that has existed and his government supported for two terms, is such a threat that it had to be fought.

There is an attempt to dumb down discussions in Canadian political life, and my colleagues in the Conservative Party have been masters at dumbing everything down. The Conservatives get down on tough on crime things, they send out their ten percenters and they denounce people. I was wondering, how will this attack on the killer tax play out with Joe Average? Here is the *National Post* response to the Conservative line on the copyright levy. It said, "The

government's nonsensical 'Boo! Hiss! No new taxes!' response...is just dumb".

That is the *National Post*, a newspaper that does not tend to give the NDP too much of an easy ride on any given day. This is interesting from the *Edmonton Journal*. It said:

While this mild tweaking of an existing statute seems like a perfectly reasonable compromise, to hear the [Conservative] government tell it, it's the Boston Tea Party circa 2010. [The] Industry Minister, misrepresenting its contents, denounced the bill as "totally nonsensical".

What the *Edmonton Journal* was referring to was that the Conservatives misrepresented what is involved with the iPod levy. They immediately started throwing numbers around, saying that this is \$75 on everything we buy, every computer we buy, every phone we buy. The bill is very clear. It is not that and they would know from meeting with the private copying levy that the last time the levy came before the Federal Court, there was talk about a levy of \$2 to \$5 to maybe \$10 on very large items. That is a fairly reasonable compromise to most Canadians.

It was interesting that the *Edmonton Journal* pointed out that the industry minister, rather than responding to a levy that the Conservatives already supported, misrepresented it.

● (1825)

However, the heritage minister is singled out as well. The heritage minister, who we might think would defend creators, also distorted the levy. Railing oddly, talking as if it included the levy on BlackBerrys, iPhones and laptops, which it does not and railing "that consumers deserve lower, not higher taxes.

The *Edmonton Journal*, in the great city of Edmonton, in the beautiful province of Alberta, said, "This is fair and balanced, worthy of support. It continued:

The Tories are clearly playing pandering politics; let's hope the other opposition parties — and independently-minded Conservatives — sign on to a thoughtful compromise that upholds basic Canadian values of straight dealing.

That is the larger picture. I am encouraging my colleagues in the Conservative Party not to always pander down to the most dumbed-down response, "It is a killer tax and we are going to fight it". I am giving them the chance to remember that this is a levy that they have supported.

Interestingly, the heritage minister came before our committee. The Liberals asked him if a fee was a tax because they were trying to get at what is a levy and what is a tax? The heritage minister asked if they were talking about the iPod tax, and they asked again if a fee was a tax?

The minister said that it depends on its purpose and it depends on how it is used, and it depends on who they were talking to. He said, for example, that if people are paying a fee for an ongoing service, like air security charges, which the government has downloaded, that it might not be, but I think people might disagree. He said that if it is dedicated in an envelope and it is transparent for that envelope, it may not be seen that way, as a tax.

Routine Proceedings

That is what the levy is. The levy is transparent, dedicated money. It does not come to the government. The government never touches this money. It goes to artists. Our minister of heritage is maybe feeling a little uncomfortable about having gone out so far on a tax.

We have to talk about where we are going and we have to have an adult conversation about copyright because there are really only two solutions. There is a way that we compensate artists or we start to litigate, and we start to go after the consumers and the users. That approach will not work. We only have to look at the United States where it is suing single mothers, high school students, and an 83-year-old lady in an old folks home for supposedly downloading songs. That is not a coherent cultural policy and it is not a defensible policy.

We see the attack on consumers that the Conservatives railed in the last Bill C-61. They deliberately blurred the distinction between counterfeit and personal use. If people broke the digital lock on their iPhone because they did not like the package they had and wanted to go somewhere else, well they were technically criminals. Or, if they had bought a CD and could not back it up to their iPod and they wanted to break that digital lock, the Conservatives treated them, the average consumers back home, the same as they would treat an international counterfeiting ring.

That is bizarre. That is an attack not just on consumers but it is an attack on artists because artists want to work with their fans. Knowing the Canadian music scene as well as I do, there is a special relationship between artists and fans in Canada because we are small markets and we have to support our artists.

We need to have this discussion about how we are going to compensate because I believe and our party, the New Democratic Party, believes that the Internet has created the opportunity for probably one of the most, if not the most, exciting democratic grassroots cultural exchange that has ever been imagined.

People are able to engage each other. People are sharing ideas. People are actively engaged. There are two threats to what exists on the Internet right now. The first threat is the corporate threat, the lobbyists who do not like citizens deciding what they want to watch and how they want to watch it and what kind of content. That is the approach that we see now with the secret ACTA negotiations that this Conservative government is engaged in.

Now under the ACTA negotiations, the government would make the ISP, the cable provider back home, liable for what consumers download, and the ISP could be sued. What do members think that would do for innovation in this country?

• (1830)

It would shut it down immediately because the cable guy would be too afraid to let people mess around if he was not sure. They would not even need the threat of copyright action. They could shut someone down. This is the three-strikes-and-you-are-out provision.

The Conservatives have not told the consumers back home and all the little people they claim to support that the negotiations that are going on internationally would create provisions that would make it possible for three violations of copyright. Maybe our son or nephew has sent a song for us to listen to. That could be a violation of copyright. Three times and we would be denied access to the

Internet, period, without going to court, without going to trial. I think this would be very invasive.

We see this approach and, again, we see the approach of the Recording Industry Association of America that is launching millions of dollars of lawsuits against individuals. That is not a reasonable response.

This is the corporate threat to the Internet, the attempt to lock down, to deny access, to make digital lock sacrosanct. That is a serious threat to the development of the cultural commons that is being created.

However I would say there is another threat, and I think this is a threat that civil society needs to look at. We talk about digital citizens and the rights of the digital citizen, but if citizens do not take the responsibility as a citizen, that is as much a threat to the development of a cultural commons.

If citizens believe, if individuals believe, that the great works that are created, the music, the books, the films that are being created by our wonderful creators, can be just taken anytime we want without anybody ever getting paid, that is a destruction of our cultural heritage.

I have met many of these digital libertarians and many of them I like and I get along with very well, but I would argue that there is nothing countercultural about taking the work that artists create. I have had people say to me that artists are living in a dead business model; they should develop a new business model.

There is nothing new in the business model of having to sell T-shirts to pay for the gas to get to one's next show. Artists have been doing that for years. There is nothing new in the business model of having to hawk buttons, bumper stickers and whatever else. Artists do this anyway, because artists barely make a living at the best of times. However artists put a lot of effort into that music and they put an investment of their future into it.

We can talk to many artists. They do not want to sue their fans. They do not want a war with their fans. They are just saying, "Find a way that we can share our music and we can be compensated".

This past winter the great U.K. rocker Billy Bragg came here to Parliament Hill. Billy Bragg was speaking for the musicians of England and many musicians all over the world and he said, "When music is played, artists should get paid". It is a fundamental principle.

Billy Bragg was saying he did not support the corporate attack on fans. He did not support the locking down of his music. He wanted people to be able to share his music and to hear it, but that he wanted to be able to continue doing what he has done so well and that it has to have a remuneration factor to it.

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The alternatives we are looking at tonight are these. One model is whether we continue to go down the road with the Conservative government that has no plan, no vision for a true digital economy, who are engaged in secret ACTA negotiations that would penalize and criminalize average citizens, that would lock down content and make it impossible for researchers, for students, music fans to be able to access works without having to worry whether they need to see a lawyer. The other progressive model is to say we know there is sharing going on, we know there is all kinds of trading, and some of this is good because it is creating new business ideas out there and we want to support the new business models that are coming. However, we want to ensure artists are compensated. That is a fair and reasonable solution.

It is not an enormous amount of money when we divide up how many songs are being put on iPods. It is a fairly reasonable amount.

We have an opportunity in the House to say that, as various members, we can agree to some fundamental principles. One of those principles is that artists have a right to be remunerated for their works.

I will say in closing I was speaking with Cory Doctorow, who is another great digital activist. He was talking about the levy. He said that what Parliament needs to do is to find a way to end the cold war between the music industry, the corporate lobbyists, the musicians and the fans, because we all benefit from great music and we all benefit from building the relationship between our artists and the consumers.

● (1835)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know this does not pertain directly to this bill, but my question does pertain to this particular vote and motion as well as this bill. Every year it seems that smaller and smaller platforms are converging into one.

To take one particular device, which the member identified as the MP3, from certain applications, whether it be through a BlackBerry or basic telephony devices, how does he propose doing that by just extending the levy? In other words, if we are going to extend the levy from what it currently is into other domains, where does he draw the line?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, the bill is very specific. It says the levy is applied to devices that are marketed and sold as music-playing devices. There are a lot of devices. A laptop, for instance, is a fully functional stereo if one wants it to be. However, it does not market itself as a stereo. It is marketed as a laptop. That is the difference.

The other question we have to raise, as an extension of the member's point, is what happens if this technology becomes redundant. It might, but if we stop the levy now and it is ended, we are not going to find anything that will help us in the transition to where we are going to be. We have to maintain the levy until we do not know when. Maybe music will be in a technical cloud at some point and we will have to deal with it then, but this is the difference between the two points.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member who just spoke.

Tomorrow we will be voting on the motion we are discussing today. The vote is on the principle. We agree that it is not a vote on the words as they are set out one after another. This vote is on the idea that creators should be paid and remunerated for their work.

Obviously the Bloc, which has always defended Quebec's artists and interests, will vote in favour of this motion. We are the ones who moved it. The NDP moved a similar motion on the same day. I have no problem with the New Democrats. As for the Liberals, we will see shortly who they are going to side with.

The member for Perth—Wellington, who is the chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, voted in favour of this motion. He wrote a letter in which he used the same words as those in the motion. He sent a letter to the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages to ask them to do just that.

How does the NDP member feel that the member for Perth—Wellington will vote? Will he apply his own logic and join the vote in favour of this motion in the House?

● (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, this is an excellent question because it is about the principle. The member is absolutely right. It is not about the technicalities; it is about whether we believe that artists should be remunerated for their work. The Bloc has made its position clear. We have made our position clear.

However, the Conservatives have said, and this was in the minister's statement last week, that because the government supports the Canada Council and the Canadian music fund, this levy is unfair. Even the most libertarian pirate party in Sweden would never take the position that, because there is an arts council in a country, no artists should ever be paid for their work and anyone should be able to come and take what they want.

That is the Conservative position. They are trying to divide artists from their fans. I am shocked that it is their position, because it would be outrageous if they went into international negotiations and said they did not need to respect international copyright because the Canada Council gives out money for touring grants.

We know where the Conservatives are going on this. The question is whether our colleagues in the Liberal Party will stand with us on the principle that artists have a right at some point to be remunerated for their works. I am hoping we are going to see all the Liberals and I will be counting heads, but it is always a question whether a few of them are going to get sick or lose their way. Maybe a couple of them will have sore backs and have to sit down.

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We will see. It will be an important vote and artists will be watching. They will be watching to see if the Parliament of Canada stands with artists and creators or says they have no right to be paid for the great work they do.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for his great speech today. I learned something about this issue and he presented it very well. I am glad the NDP has a critic for digital and copyright issues. He has been doing great work.

I am also pleased to support his private member's bill, Bill C-499, extending the private copying levy to music players, because it is a technical adjustment that makes great sense and honours a very Canadian solution to the whole question of how we fairly remunerate artists for the work they do. It is one that has been tried and tested and has proven itself to be true to the principle of making sure artists are paid for their creations.

There have been, as he points out, some very disingenuous attempts to question the direction the committee is proposing and he is proposing in his private member's legislation. The scaremongering about the cost of this is one thing the Conservatives have done, completely misrepresenting what is actually proposed and what would be implemented.

Also, there has been a failure to understand the difference between a levy, which is completed dedicated to a specific purpose, in this case supporting the incomes of artists, and a tax that goes into the general revenue of the government. In the earlier part of the debate, Conservative members constantly came back to that issue and misunderstood the difference.

I wonder if the member might comment a little more about how fans perceive this, fans who appreciate the work of artists and frequently listen to it. How do they perceive the idea of finding a mechanism to ensure that the people who they appreciate by listening to their music are fairly remunerated for the work they have done in creating that music?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, what is very interesting in this discussion is that, if we look at the statistics, we will find that artists have a special relationship with their fan base and fans want to buy music.

In fact, there was a study done in the U.K. on downloading, on kids who download music and who download music for free, and the vast majority of them said they did not have a problem paying for music. They had a problem with not having easy access to music. If they can get it easily, they will get it easily, but they were not fundamentally opposed. They were not libertarians on this. They would support it.

I have been speaking on talk radio and to various groups about this motion. Once people get the idea that it is not a tax, as the Conservatives have misrepresented, but a levy that is dedicated to artists, they ask, for example, after what has been negotiated at ACTA, that if they get stopped at the border, whether the U.S. border officials will not be able to take their iPods and say they are illegal. They ask if they have some protection as fans for what they buy and they will not be sued. That is part of what it is.

Artists are going to get some remuneration, and they are not phenomenal amounts of money. From having toured this country I can tell members that, if artists were getting \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000 from the levy, that is sometimes the difference between being able to continue as musicians and having to stop. Our artists are living on pitifully small amounts of money and they create the music we love.

The message that should be coming out of Parliament is that we as Canadians and as the Government of Canada recognize the importance of building that relationship rather than doing what the Conservatives always do, which is to try to pit one group against another. They are desperate for wedge issues. They are trying to drive a wedge between music fans and the creators, but I hope the wedge-issue politics will stop as Conservatives realize, just as fans and artists realize, that this is a compromise and people benefit.

● (1845)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, the motion of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage before the House today arrives at an opportune moment. These issues raised are important to Canadians and we welcome this debate.

As my hon. colleagues will remember, our government announced in the Speech from the Throne earlier last month that it would take steps to strengthen laws governing intellectual property in copyright. The committee's motion presents a valuable and timely opportunity for us to begin our discussions in this area.

I would like to remind the House that our government has pledged its commitment to helping Canadians succeed and meet the emerging challenges of the global and digital economy. We believe that innovation, collaboration and creativity must be the foundation of any such efforts. Let us celebrate and build on the fact that through the efforts of individuals and businesses from across our great country we are bringing innovative ideas, products and processes to the world stage.

Our country's work should and is recognized as effective, powerful, innovative and of the highest quality. It is for this reason that our government has made the unprecedented investments in business innovation and creativity through Canada's economic action plan. These investments will help Canadians build an economy that will provide prosperity and jobs for both today and tomorrow. However, to do this, Canadians must be able to develop the knowledge and skills they need to create and take advantage of economic opportunities. Of these, one of our government's priorities is to capitalize on the opportunities offered by the digital economy.

As we all know, technological change is occurring at an unprecedented speed and intensity. We cannot afford to simply be reactive as we are presented with both the opportunities and the challenges posed by increasingly rapid technological change. The question becomes: How do we secure our place as a world leader in an ever increasingly competitive marketplace?

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Canada needs to be at the forefront of these new markets, ready and equipped to benefit from the opportunities it creates. That is why our Conservative government is working to ensure that our legislative and regulatory approach is conducive to supporting these businesses. We want to ensure that Canadian businesses are equipped to deal with the challenges posed and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital revolution with strong intellectual property laws that encourage new ideas and protect the rights of Canadians.

Our government recognizes that updated copyright legislation will strengthen Canada's ability to compete in the global digital economy and contribute to our cultural and civic life. As such, we are committed to modifying the laws governing intellectual property and copyright with the ultimate goal of creating an environment that encourages the creation of new ideas and contributes to economic prosperity overall.

●(1850)

I will take a moment here to remind the House that industries touched by copyright account for 4.5% of our gross domestic product and employ 5.5% of our workforce. These are industries that are creating wealth and value where none existed before. This is why our government is committed to helping ensure our copyright laws are designed in a way that the ingenuity of Canada's best and brightest can continue to flourish. We will foster creativity, innovation and economic growth by giving Canadian creators and consumers the tools they need to keep Canada competitive internationally.

The field of copyright is very complex and there are many players who have a wide variety of views and interests. Our government must consider and balance these interests as we move forward to a modernized copyright law.

Our government wanted to take the opportunity to listen to what Canadians had to say about why copyright is important to them. In the summer of 2009, we took the initiative and demonstrated leadership within the current copyright debate by holding eight weeks of public consultations on copyright reform. Our process allowed interested Canadians to have their say in discussions of Canada's copyright law. We hosted events right across our great country.

Furthermore, we leveraged new technologies to reach out and consult with a greater number of Canadians as effectively as possible through our interactive website.

The participation was unprecedented and we welcomed the comments of rights holders, users, intermediaries and everyday Canadians.

We know that Canadians are concerned with copyright and its implications in our increasingly digital environment. This was demonstrated by the thousands of Canadians who took the time to participate in one way or another.

I will remind my colleagues of the scope of participation in this process. In total, we received more than 8,000 formal written submissions from organizations and individuals across the country, while over 1,000 Canadians attended live events, which included both public town halls and stakeholder round tables, across the

country, in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Peterborough, Gatineau, Montreal, City of Quebec and Halifax, at which they were able to offer their views.

The most easily accessible way to participate was an interactive website that received more than 30,000 unique visits. More than 2,200 visitors registered as users and they collectively left more than 2,500 comments on the site through an online forum. The online forum allowed site visitors to create their own threads of discussion and views and comment on what others had to say. I am pleased to tell members that this was quite a lively discussion that explored the issues associated with copyright.

●(1855)

Participants were asked questions to determine their personal interest in copyright law and how they believed the law should be strengthened in light of that interest. They were asked how copyright laws should reflect Canadian values and interests. They were asked how these laws might better foster innovation and creativity. They were asked what sorts of copyright changes would best foster competition and investment. They also were asked what kinds of changes would best position Canada as a leader in the global digital economy.

Let me emphasize that this open and transparent process will help us to deliver new legislation that is forward-looking and reflects Canadian values.

The feedback we have received on the consultations has been very positive and the level of debate is one of which we are very proud. Much as the standing committee's motion suggests, the Canadian private copying regime is an issue of interest which was discussed during the consultations. The motion before us bears directly on that regime's future. I will take a moment to expand upon it here.

The Canadian private copying regime was created 13 years ago through the 1997 copyright reforms. It was designed to deal with the challenges stemming from new technology. With better technology, Canadians could easily make and use copies of music in their possession. Making such copies without the copyright holder's explicit consent was illegal.

This created a situation in which individuals regularly flouted the law, even if they were not aware of this. This also meant that rights holders were not being compensated for the use of the work to which they held the copyright. The solution was to place a levy on the blank media consumers use to make copies and then distribute this money to copyright holders. This solution was known as the Canadian private copying regime and its legal basis was set forth in the Copyright Act.

Under the private copying regime, the copyright holders of sound recordings are entitled to receive compensation drawn out of the moneys collected against blank media. The regime also allows Canadians to make copies of audio works for their personal use without infringing copyright law.

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To manage the operation of the regime, the Copyright Board of Canada authorized a body known as the Canadian Private Copying Collective. Based out of Toronto, this non-profit agency is an umbrella organization that represents songwriters, recording artists, music publishers and record companies. The Canadian Private Copying Collective receives moneys arising from the levies and distributes these to copyright holders. To date, the Canadian Private Copying Collective states that it has distributed over \$180 million to copyright holders in the music sector.

As with many other elements of the Copyright Act, the Canadian private copying regime has always been the subject of debate. It is important to note that technological changes that occurred since the creation of the regime 13 years ago had added new elements to the debate. Various technological developments mean that one does not necessarily need to purchase blank media to make copies anymore.

● (1900)

Needless to say, there are many views around how this might be addressed. Our government believes it is important that we consider all these views when contemplating possible solutions. In our consultations in the summer of 2009, the views we heard on the future of Canadian private copying regime were many and varied. Issues such as compensation for copyright holders, flexibility, reasonableness and clarity were all discussed.

There were some who would like to see the act amended, as indeed the committee report proposes, such that a tax may also be charged on digital recording devices, such as MP3 players and other media recorders, computers, cell phones, et cetera. The opposition coalition's proposed tax would equal up to \$80 per iPod and MP3 player for Canadian consumers.

The viability of the regime in light of the new technological developments needs to be revisited and re-examined. We need to develop changes that can encourage new business models. Many of those who were consulted were eager to defend their right to continue to use electronic files in their possession and to transfer these files to new media, such as MP3 players, without paying additional fees.

In short, some have come to expect that the market will give consumers a wider variety of material in formats that are both more convenient and less expensive than what is currently available.

We need to examine how we can maintain protection of artists' rights and their ability to receive payments for use of their work while avoiding an additional tax on consumers. Canadians also expect that our copyright laws will continue to foster economic growth by providing incentives to our best and brightest to continue to create.

As we go forward in our consideration of this legislation, I encourage this House to keep all these points in mind, particularly how the proposed amendment fits into the larger copyright domain. We need to keep our eye on the bigger picture and the work our government has already begun well before the adoption of the motion.

We look forward to discussing these issues during this debate. Thanks to the consultations, we are now equipped with a wide variety of points of view as we turn our attention to preparing

copyright legislation. This is essential because we know that technology will continue to develop. It will not be enough to simply amend the act to respond to each new challenge presented to us by technology.

Let us proceed together to update and strengthen our copyright law in a way that will strengthen Canadians' ability to compete in the global digital economy. Moreover, let us work to enhance their ability to continue to make their significant contribution to our cultural and civic life.

● (1905)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I need to get this straight in my own mind; I am not sure as there are several angles to this.

First of all, I take issue with the fact that the hon. member said that the government is happy to further this debate, when all of her colleagues, with the exception of one, voted against bringing this to the House.

I need two specific answers. She talked about a tax that is going to be a punitive measure towards people to support artists, but yet in her speech she praised the original copyright regime. The original levy is fine, but really it is an extension of the same thing. Is that too a tax that the government likes?

And because I too am into fair dealing, I will ask her the same question that I asked her colleague. The fee that was imposed on travellers the week before the budget, is that too a tax?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, adhering to the issue at hand, during my speech I provided a background on how the current levies came to be. In the face of new and developing technology, we must work together in a comprehensive fashion rather than simply react by involving a new or additional tax. We must work together with creators as well as innovators to find a solution that will meet all of our needs.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the member does not understand the Liberal member's question. I do not know if she understood what he said.

I would like her to answer with a simple yes or no. Is the member in favour of the exemption for private copying?

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I am responding on behalf of the government. Personal views aside, our goal at this point in time is to look at the entire copyright legislation as a whole and to take into consideration Canada's place in the global digital economy as opposed to just looking at a microcosm of the copyright law.

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Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I do not think it would be unfair to say that the government is probably the greatest group of underachievers we have seen in some time. I do not know how many times we heard that the Conservatives discovered an interactive website and got consultations. That would not have been bad five years ago, but if that is as good as it gets five years on, that is pretty pitiful.

I remember the very first Conservative heritage minister coming before our committee on the very first day. That minister made one really clear promise. She said that we would have new copyright legislation by Christmas. We all grew long beards waiting and it never happened. Then Bill C-61 came along. Bill C-61 was the government's response. I have never seen a piece of legislation brought forward with such great fanfare that was then pulled so quickly because it was ridiculed as a dog's breakfast.

Now we are in "consultations". I am concerned about the consultations because the member does not have her facts right. She keeps calling the levy a tax and saying that it would impose an \$80 fee. Who is writing her notes? I want to know, because when the Federal Court looked at the issue of the iPod levy in 2005, that \$80 figure was not anywhere to be seen. We were talking \$2 to \$5 to \$10.

Maybe the government's consultations have gotten mixed up, or maybe it is a case of what the *Edmonton Journal* said about how the industry minister misrepresented facts and the heritage minister misrepresented facts.

I would like to ask a simple question. What was wrong with Bill C-61 that the government felt it had to go back and engage in thousands and thousands of hours of consultation? What was it specifically about Bill C-61 that the government was so embarrassed it had to pull it off the table?

•(1910)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, when copyright legislation was originally introduced, many of my colleagues and I received considerable feedback on what was being proposed. This Conservative government listens. We began the consultation process again. In addition to interactive websites, we did go across the country, but it was just not feasible for public consultations to occur in every community throughout Canada. It was more feasible for everyday Canadians to consult through the interactive media.

In the public consultations, the issue arose that Canadians, by being exposed to a levy or automatic iPod tax, were being blanketed with the assumption that what they were purchasing was going to be used for the purposes of piracy.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The iPod levy was not in Bill C-61, so again I think she is mistaking it. She needs to explain what the complaints were because it was not in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member is presenting I believe a point for debate that he may want to raise later on.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, one has to be very careful in the wording of a bill because the way it is worded could lead to the imposing of levies on yet undiscovered technologies. This is the sort of fear that was relayed to other MPs as well during the

consultations. Businesses which do not use CDs or DVDs for recording music and use them specifically for backing up data were being charged a levy for music and creators even though their use of the media was strictly for business. They were being automatically accused, in their perception, of being pirates.

What I find most interesting is the proposer of the bill relating to the motion at hand says that fans want to pay for music and that is sort of contradictory to this proposed iTax. Why would we automatically treat them as though they were pirates by levying a tax on the assumption that they would pirate the music when they are so willing to pay for it in the first place?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to compliment the member for Timmins—James Bay on the terrific work he has done on this whole issue now for a number of years.

The bottom line for me comes down to the question of compensating or litigating. We see what is happening in the United States. We cannot live through a process where we have lawyers chasing kids and senior citizens. This is going to be an absolute minefield if we allow the lawyers to solve these problems. The fact is the Conservatives are misrepresenting when they are talking about a \$70 tax and we are talking about a \$2 levy. Let us get—

•(1915)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has 30 seconds to respond.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I would like to mention to the House that even as close as one hour away there are homesteads which do not have hard lines for telephones. Senior citizens on fixed incomes are dependent on a cell phone as life support for their health. These same senior citizens who rely on purchasing a cell phone for their safety are going to be automatically assumed to be taking creators' work and defying copyrights. That is not being fair to all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodríguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Brampton—Springdale.

I am pleased to be able to speak to the motion moved by my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert. It is a very complex, topical debate that goes far beyond the context and scope of the motion.

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We are in the midst of a transition to a digital economy, which affects culture in a big way. It is a topic we are faced with every day, not only in the House of Commons, but also in the business world, in broadcasting, and in film studios, to name a few. We could talk about it even more, if this government would be more open about the anti-counterfeiting trade agreement, which concerns all of us. We know our government colleagues very well, and they like to have full control over access to information. That said, let us get back to the matter at hand.

The Liberal Party has always believed and still strongly believes that our artists, especially our creators, must be paid and remunerated for their work. Our party has always been recognized as a reliable partner for Quebec and Canadian artists. This is the case because we recognize the value and wealth of the contributions made by our artists and cultural industries.

Our party fought back when the Conservatives decided to eliminate various cultural programs in 2008 for ideological reasons. I can assure the House that we will continue to protect what our artists do to enhance our culture with courage, innovation and creativity.

This is why I agree in principle with my colleague's motion. Clearly, our creators should be compensated for the valuable work they do. Who would agree that they should not be compensated for what they create, except maybe our Conservative colleagues?

The purpose of the motion before us is not to create a new law or a new tax. Its purpose is to update the current law, because there is already a system of levies on recording media such as blank CDs to account for copies. That already exists. Why should the new technology that is replacing CDs not be subject to the same law?

The argument we have heard from the Conservatives today makes no sense. Unlike them, we know that this motion has nothing to do with a new tax; it has to do with a levy on electronic devices. That levy would be redistributed directly to artists.

My colleague should know that when a tax is collected, the money goes into the government's consolidated revenue fund and can then be put toward government priorities. In this case, we are talking about a levy that goes directly to creators and artists. The government does not get one cent of the money.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and his parliamentary secretary cannot tell the difference between a tax and a levy, and they are hoping that the public will not be able to either.

I have said it before and I will say it again: our artists should be compensated for their work. They amply deserve to be compensated. It is logical, fair and essential to maintaining a strong, vital cultural milieu. The cultural industry generates \$40 billion in revenue and creates more than 600,000 jobs in Canada. Culture makes a significant contribution not only to our economy but to our everyday lives. Can we even imagine a day without culture?

We must support our artists by ensuring that our legislative framework reflects this new reality. My colleague's motion talks about redefining that framework. Unfortunately, though, this motion has serious problems in terms of process and content.

With respect to content, it is clear that the motion is not specific enough, particularly when it comes to the digital devices targeted by the new levy. What exactly are we talking about? We know that it would apply to iPods because people use them primarily to listen to music, but would it also apply to the BlackBerry and iPhone?

● (1920)

That is a good question. Will it also apply to home computers? In short, will it apply to all devices that have a memory and can record and play back music? We think it is absolutely critical that we differentiate between these devices based on their primary use. The primary use of a device that will be subject to the levy is a new element we have to consider in this debate.

This matter deserves to be taken seriously, but a motion that does not take this distinction into account will not help. However, I want to say that the work that went into this motion is not for nothing. It reminds us that we still have a lot to do to deal with current problems that need solutions. That is what I wanted to say about the content of the motion.

With respect to the process my colleague has chosen, with all due respect, I must say that it was somewhat ill-advised. For this discussion to be productive, it must take place within the larger context of the ongoing debate on copyright. Many have said that the government is behind when it comes to updating that kind of legislation. My NDP colleague mentioned that too.

The Conservatives believe that it is more important to advance their ideological agenda than to help our artists. We all know that. The Copyright Act is in dire need of amendment, but we have to deal with it comprehensively. We cannot do it by playing with motions that will not end up changing anything. Nor can we dissect every little part of the Copyright Act and turn all of those parts into motions to win political points.

Unfortunately, this motion is incomplete. It comes at a bad time and in the worst way. In fact, it could be counterproductive and hinder our current objectives. The Conservatives have taken advantage of this in order to spread falsehoods about the end goal. The Bloc Québécois motion—and we heard this again today—has allowed the Conservatives to completely shift the debate to make it an issue of taxes. We all know that is not the case.

The Conservatives are obsessed with the word tax. They are unable to distinguish between a tax and a levy. The motion as presented has given the government the opportunity to talk about taxes. This will hurt our artists in future debates. The current debate will not change anything, but this motion may hurt future debates.

We must quickly come up with something concrete. I invite my colleague and her party and all the other hon. members to work with us in order to come up with a system. It could be the one proposed in the motion, but with some clarifications. We want a system that will enable our artists to be paid for their work. It is a matter of common sense, justice and equality.

Routine Proceedings

Instead of debating a motion that, even if it were accepted, would not change anything and that simply allows the government to make speeches day after day about taxes, why not work together to amend the legislation when the time comes? That way, our artists will get what they deserve and will be paid for their creations.

• (1925)

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really do not understand the member for Honoré-Mercier, the Liberal member who just spoke. He is twisting all of the arguments and is finding only the faults in this motion, when his own colleague, the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, already said he was in favour of it on March 26 in this House. Furthermore, in committee, two of the three Liberal members present voted in favour of this motion. The third abstained. So I do not understand that what was good last week is no longer good this week.

I get the impression that the member for Honoré-Mercier is only finding the faults in the motion because he has already decided to vote against it, since he agrees with the arguments of the Conservatives, that this is a tax. The member feels vulnerable when he hears claims that his party is in favour of taxes. That is the only reason.

I do not know if he is trying to save his party or what, but his attitude and behaviour are opposed to the interests of artists. I am extremely disappointed in his position. Artists will judge the Liberal Party accordingly.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I have to say that my colleague is out to lunch.

I said earlier that the motion has the merit of opening a debate. That is its merit. It has the merit that we can debate it. Now, the problem with her motion is that the member simply wants to score political points. There is absolutely nothing to this motion—the government does not have to follow it. But it gives her the chance to attack the government and the current system by talking about taxes.

As a point of background, we are in complete disagreement with the Conservatives when it comes to taxes. We consider it a levy. I said that three times. I am sorry that my colleague did not listen to my speech, but I said three times that there is a huge difference between a tax and a levy. A tax is directed to the consolidated revenue fund and the government can use it for its priorities. But a levy, such as that on CDs or that which would be on an iPod, would be distributed to the artists. I understand this very well.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: The member can explain himself to the artists.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thought we were making some progress with the Liberals until the second part of the member's speech. He started off rather strong and rather positive, but I hope we can get this issue resolved before the vote. As the member of the Bloc mentioned, two Liberals on the committee were solidly behind the motion. Certainly the

member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, my good friend, has spoken seemingly in favour of it. He does not seem to have the same confusion as the existing speakers, so perhaps they can resolve it among themselves.

However, it is very clear that the government cannot get this job done. I remember Bill C-61, when the Conservatives announced it and then pulled it. Therefore, we cannot rely on them to get a successful conclusion through this process. How long have they have been working at this? To leave the job to them, we will never see a solution.

Clearly the motion gives some direction, has some good vision to it and has a solution to it. We should stick together as opposition. We support Liberal initiatives that we do not always—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier has 40 seconds left.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member on at least one thing, that is, we cannot trust the Conservative government when it comes to culture.

As I said over and over in my speech, our artists must be paid for what they create. We all agree on that, except the Conservative government. However, a motion that says more or less nothing about more or less everything does not serve this debate. On the contrary, it can be counterproductive.

I agree that we must work together. There is no need to worry, for my colleague and I get along just fine, like the rest of my colleagues here. So we will work together—the NDP, the Bloc and the Liberals—to change the legislation and ensure that our artists are paid.

• (1930)

[English]

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak to my colleague's motion. As we all know, the world around us is evolving at a fast pace and we must ensure that the legislative frameworks that we create are well-suited for this change, especially in the area of technology.

In this digital economy era, a sector that has to work even harder is the cultural sector to keep up with the change. We must ensure that the change that it is encountering is looked at as opportunities versus constraints. It is for this reason that it is incredibly important to make an informed decision.

In accordance with our historical reputation of being a strong partner in the cultural industry, I know that many of my caucus colleagues in the Liberal Party wish to ensure that our cultural heritage policy and our cultural heritage in Canada is protected, while at the same time promoting creativity and innovation and also ensuring that the rights of all artists are protected in our country.

For instance, members may recall that we supported the industry when the Conservatives decided to make a \$45 million ideological cut, both to the loss of Trade Routes and the PromArt programs. The industry was yearning for help. I know that many individuals in this House and, in particular, caucus colleagues, ensured that they were with them to support them during that difficult time.

Routine Proceedings

We must ensure that we have a strong and dynamic cultural industry. This is why we believe that artists must be supported and also remunerated for their work. They are talented, hard-working and dedicated and we must ensure they have the opportunity, the resources and the tools they need to succeed.

The motion presented by my colleague deals with the issue of the latest technologies not being included in a law that already applies to compact discs, or CDs. We talk about BlackBerrys and iPods. Clearly, the law must be modernized to take into account the new digital environment in which we live and the technologies that are being used by many Canadians across this country, in particular, our young people.

Also, to call such a measure and use the word “tax” is simply wrong. It is a levy, which means that the money raised will go directly to the rights of owners and that the government would not make any particular money out of all of the levies that are collected. I would hope that this difference and this particular concept between a tax and a levy would be knowledgeable to all members to ensure that all individuals could make an informed decision.

However, it is still inconceivable to think that artists should not be able to get their fair share for what they produce through their talent, their hard work and their efforts. One way or another, we must ensure that artists are supported. They are our industry's bread and butter, which is why some of the initiatives put forward by the government previously have been flawed.

In this spirit, I believe that the rationale behind my colleague's motion is actually sound, as my previous colleague just stated in his speech.

We must ensure that our artists receive their fair share not only for what they produce but also because they deserve it and because such a measure would help to ensure that the cultural industry keeps the creativity and the innovation and also gets rewarded for it. However, most important, it would help to ensure that artists and the cultural industry are viable and sustainable for many years to come. We must realize that the cultural sector alone represents over \$40 billion and over 600,000 jobs in Canada. We must ensure that we protect and promote our cultural industries in Canada.

There are many flaws with the motion that we have identified in talking to many individuals, to stakeholders and to organizations. For example, the motion does not talk about devices that would be levied. What about the BlackBerrys and iPods that are being used? It is our belief that we must study this further to ensure it makes sense. We must ensure that the categories for this particular motion would be identified.

It is also important to have further studies on this before making a decision. We all must be informed and educated before making a decision that could impact the cultural industry and many Canadians and, most important, many consumers of these products.

However, in talking to some of the advocates, the stakeholders and organizations, they identified another criticism. They also highlighted the need for Canada as a country and for all of us as parliamentarians to revisit the copyright law and legislation.

●(1935)

In order for us to reframe this legislation, we must look at it in its entirety, not just a fraction of it. The committee report only deals with a portion of the copyright legislation, not its entirety.

The government must take immediate action to bring forward changes that are desired by the industry. However, these changes must be brought forward in consultation, collaboration and co-operation with all of the stakeholders at the table. It must not be done in isolation. In addition, the timing that has been identified perhaps is not the best.

On the international scene, many debates and discussions have been held throughout the world in regard to the issue of copyright. Any changes that we make here in Canada must be uniform. We must ensure that we have a copyright law that protects consumers, that protects the artists, that protects the stakeholders and the organizations.

Many organizations and stakeholders have been advocating for a change to the copyright legislation to ensure that it is fair, to ensure that all of the necessary players and stakeholders have an opportunity not only to benefit, but to be protected. At the same time there needs to be an opportunity to promote our cultural industries. We must ensure that we bring forward this change to the legislation as soon as possible, with proper consultation and collaboration.

We must also ensure that the decisions that come forward are done in consultation with all members of the House. In talking to many of the stakeholders, I have heard first-hand that they felt shut out of the previous copyright legislation.

This particular motion does not reflect all the changes that need to be made. It does not exactly identify the type of products and technologies that would be used. In particular, it does not exactly identify the impact it would have on young people in this country who I would think would be the prime consumers of such products.

As a member of the House of Commons heritage committee, I know there are many dedicated and hard-working individuals who want to ensure that we bring forward legislation which is reflective of the needs and the priorities of the organizations and the individuals and most important, Canadians, whom we are trying to help.

We must modernize our copyright legislation to ensure that it is coherent with the needs of the creator and also the consumer. We must work together to ensure that this legislative framework is beneficial for everybody. By putting partisanship and politics aside, all of us as parliamentarians will be able to work together in a co-operative and collaborative fashion to ensure that consumers are protected, to ensure that those individuals, such as artists with their talent, with their creativity, with their dedication, are also rewarded. We must ensure that legislation that is brought forward provides an opportunity for everyone to succeed. We must continue to invest in our cultural industries.

Routine Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, CD sales are plummeting, although people are still listening to music, even more than ever before. At 22¢ for audio cassettes and 29¢ for CDs, as set out in the private copying legislation, in 22 months there will be no more royalties to give to artists. This is very urgent.

Can the member who just spoke tell me how she believes that artists will be able to earn a living from their art from now on? We need to go beyond principles, beyond Liberal Party rhetoric, and take action to do something concrete and ensure that artists have an income.

[*English*]

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Madam Speaker, it is incredibly important to reward artists for their hard work, for their dedication, their time and their efforts. Many members on this side of the House, in particular my caucus colleagues, have been advocating for that. Unfortunately, the motion would not do anything really to assist artists in that respect.

We must look at copyright legislation as a whole and bring in changes that would benefit the artists who are working so diligently and effectively. We must ensure those changes benefit them and allow for creativity and innovation, and at the same time consider the consumer. It is unfortunate that this motion does not really address these particular issues.

• (1940)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I guess it is kind of disappointing to hear that in the committee the Conservative chair was supporting the motion, the two Liberal members on the committee were supporting the motion and now we get into the House and we have a different cast of players here.

I do not know what the Conservatives have done to their chair but obviously the chair is not asking any questions or making any presentations tonight. I do not know where the Liberal members are but their representatives here are not reflecting in my opinion what my understanding was that they agreed to in the committee.

Having said that, I listened to the member for Timmins—James Bay make an excellent presentation tonight. Some of the observations he made about the government were particularly interesting because we have seen them played out over the last few months, particularly on the issue of whether it is a levy or a tax. The Conservatives are running around trying to exaggerate and essentially misrepresent this as a tax. They say that it is a \$70 tax on iPods when the member for Timmins—James Bay pointed out that we are talking about \$2. It is not a tax. It is a levy to help artists. That is what it is all about.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: Madam Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona spoke about us supporting this motion at committee.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, along with my colleague, the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, who is the official critic for the official opposition on the Canadian Heritage file, we were most interested in having the motion brought forward to the Chamber where we could have an

opportunity to debate, discuss and, hopefully, highlight for the government the need for copyright legislation to ensure that we modernize it and that it is reflective of the needs of the organizations, the stakeholders, the advocates and, most important, the artists.

We are in no way, shape or form advocating our responsibility away from the artists. We support the artists and they must get the resources, the skills and tools they need to succeed. Unfortunately, the debate both by the parliamentarians bringing forward the motion and some of the other members does nothing to reward the artists for their creativity, their innovation, their hard work and their efforts.

We on this side of the House are committed to working with the artists. As a long-standing member of the Canadian heritage committee, I and my colleague, the official critic, have worked diligently and earnestly with all the stakeholders, organizations, advocates and artists to ensure we have legislation that is modernized and reflects the needs of artists and also provides protection for the consumers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am glad to speak this evening to the motion by my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, which the committee has already adopted, as has been mentioned several times. As my NDP colleague said, half the Liberals on the committee voted in favour of the motion, as did the chair, who is a Conservative. So this is not a motion that some members on this side of the House just came up with. It comes directly from the committee and has the committee's support on the whole.

A well-known American author, Buckminster Fuller, who wrote *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*—a book that was famous in its day—and designed the geodesic dome that served as the U.S. pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal, once said that if you are in a shipwreck and all the boats are gone, a piano top buoyant enough to keep you afloat that comes along makes a fortuitous life preserver. But this is not to say that the best way to design a life preserver is in the form of a piano top.

What our friend Buckminster meant—and it applies perfectly to our debate today—is that in an emergency, we do not always have time to fuss over details and we sometimes have to take the most expedient course of action instead of waiting for the best course of action. Perfect is quite often the enemy of good.

Our singers, our musicians, our authors, our songwriters and composers and all those who support them are in a state of emergency. Day after day, they are watching their copyright revenue melt away like snow in the sun. Paradoxically, consumption of their work is growing fast, and because of this gap, many of them have an annual income that puts them at the poverty level. This is unfair to them. Not every artist is a Luc Plamondon, a Céline Dion or a member of Cirque du Soleil who has made it big. Many artists are just starting out and still have far to go before they reach their goals.

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It is simply a stalling tactic to claim in this House, as many members have, that before taking action we must wait for a comprehensive digital strategy and the modernization of the Copyright Act in keeping with this new strategy and what is being done internationally. This reasoning seeks to justify inaction, which is unwarranted at present and harms the artists concerned as well as their creations. In this sector, the creation is the goose that lays the golden egg for the entire system. If there is no creation, there will be no product for distribution. If there is no product for distribution, there will be no income to share.

Therefore we must ensure, and quickly, that our artists receive their share of the pie. They are entitled to it and we owe it to them. We hope they will continue to create, as their success assures us of ours. If the income of our creators nosedives when the income of all the others in the chain increases, it is simply because new technologies, such as MP3s and iPods, are not covered by the current Copyright Act.

The motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, which we are asking the House to adopt, will solve this problem, albeit temporarily. The motion reads as follows:

That the Committee recommends that the government amend Part VIII of the Copyright Act so that the definition of "audio recording medium" extends to devices with internal memory, so that the levy on copying music will apply to digital music recorders as well, thereby entitling music creators to some compensation for the copies made of their work.

This is, in fact, a declaration of principle.

● (1945)

My colleague, the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, was very careful to specify the following in her remarks a few weeks ago:

We are asking to update the legislation to include MP3s.

I said in my speech that the measure would apply only to MP3 digital audio recorders. We are seeing the usual scare tactics from people who say that the measure will apply to smartphones such as the BlackBerry, but that is false.

That is what my colleague said.

We consider this a temporary solution to the problem because we are well aware that we will soon need a much more comprehensive framework to deal with the issues. Canadian regulations do not apply to broadcasting in new media. The CRTC has stated that many of the issues surrounding new media do not fall within its current mandate. That is why we will have to review its mandate, a process that will be neither quick nor easy.

There are many issues related to new media, including taxation, copyright, privacy, spectrum management and the convergence of the broadcasting and telecommunications industries, which fall within the purview of several federal departments, thus complicating matters. The CRTC asked the Government of Canada to coordinate its approach to these intersecting issues by developing a national digital strategy, but that is not going to happen overnight.

This is all the more pressing because we are talking about a major economic sector in which Canada's 2,300 digital media companies employ 18,000 workers and generate some \$3.5 billion in revenue per year. That is not peanuts.

I should also point out that people are adopting these new technologies at an ever-increasing rate.

For example, a group of Harvard students set up the social networking site Facebook in 2004. Just five years later—not 50—in September 2009, the site had 300 million active users worldwide, including 12 million in Canada. That is an example of how fast things are changing.

In the same vein, Google Inc. is only 12 years old. The company was founded in 1998 by two students at Stanford University, Larry Page and Sergey Brin. The initial search engine quickly became the most powerful in the world and it currently processes roughly 70% of all online requests for information. Google is now the most popular Internet search engine and has generated astronomical revenues for its creators who have sold advertising space on the search pages.

Would the creators of Google have agreed to invest so much talent, time, energy and money if there had been no chance of being paid one day for their investment and creativity? I doubt it and, in my opinion, my colleagues do not think so either.

Our music creators are currently in a situation where their creative efforts might not be compensated because everyone can use their property without paying for it. We have to help them. It is urgent.

At the scene of an accident, we do not engage the multi-trauma victim in a discussion on medical philosophy or the future of health. We first ensure that the injured person is breathing, that the bleeding has stopped and that the person will survive long enough to receive the right treatment in order to recover.

That is exactly what the motion from my colleague, the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, is trying to do.

I have read the questions and comments from government members that opposition members have been hearing in recent weeks, at least all the ones that were about this motion. A number of these questions and comments seemed to be trying to pass opposition members off as amateurs and government members, as usual, as professionals.

I would like to remind members opposite about something that is often forgotten: amateurs built Noah's ark, and professionals built the Titanic.

● (1950)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all feel that something needs to be done, and soon.

We also feel that creators need to be remunerated and that we need to support them. We are not against the principle of extending royalties to certain electronic devices. We need to decide which ones and how they will be defined.

I would like to bring my colleague back to earth. He is talking about urgency and he seems to be saying that the motion will change everything. That is not true. This motion aims at nothing more than scoring political points when the real debate lies elsewhere. That debate needs to happen in order for change to occur.

Can my colleague tell me what exactly would change for artists if we passed this motion here in the House tomorrow afternoon? Is this motion not just a petty political game?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Roger Pomerleau: Madam Speaker, what this does is to send a clear message to the minister that Parliament has decided to support people who create music and called on the government to do the same.

Does the government have to respond to that? It is not responding at all, but eventually, the government will have to answer for its actions and for the fact that it does not follow through on the motions passed in the House by everyone in Parliament. That is how it will play out. This will not change any specific things for them overnight, but it does send a very clear message.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 7:55 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, the question is deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested.

● (1955)

[*English*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 66(2)(c) the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 14, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:55 p.m.)

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