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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 3, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 3, 2010

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to congratulate everyone who let their names stand in the municipal elections recently held in Ontario. Municipal elections are an important part of democracy. Those who do run deserve the thanks of all the citizens they serve.

To all those recently elected officials, there is a big job ahead. The difficult financial times are not all behind us. The future will take a great deal of their time and effort to manage the expectations and needs of their communities.

In particular, I would like to welcome back Mayors McKay and Lupton, recently elected Mayor Doan and newly elected Mayors Wearn, Mayberry, Comiskey, Lessif and Pat Sobeski, a former member of the House. I look forward to working with and supporting all eight of Oxford county's municipal councils and the Oxford County Council.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in memory of the victims of a terrible massacre against Sikhs that took place in India in 1984. Pogroms encouraged by the state killed thousands of innocent Sikh men, women and children, raped women, looted and set fire to Sikh homes, businesses and gurdwaras.

In memory of these victims, the Sikh nation has donated blood year after year across Canada to save over 50,000 lives.

To this day, there have been no convictions for these acts of hate. Canada is a country founded on human rights and I encourage all members of the House to join me in remembering the fallen and calling on the Indian government to bring those responsible to justice.

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• (1405)

[*Translation*]

SAGUENAY FJORD

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion that it officially support the proposal to inscribe the Saguenay Fjord site on Canada's tentative list for 2014, in anticipation of a recognition as a UNESCO world heritage site.

The unanimous adoption of this motion is a strong endorsement of the process I initiated with the help of Dr. Jules Dufour and my colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, in order to get the Saguenay Fjord on this list of world wonders. Representatives from the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and Haute-Côte-Nord regions strongly support this proposal and are working together to promote it.

Quebec recognizes the unique and exceptional value of the Saguenay Fjord as a natural site and believes that it is important to have it recognized by UNESCO. Now it is up to the Canadian government to lend its support.

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[*English*]

TEACHERS INSTITUTE ON CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy. This is a group that every year chooses 70 outstanding teachers from across the country. They are chosen for their intelligence, passion and dedication to our democratic system.

Statements by Members

They come to better understand our parliamentary system and to better understand the working lives of members of Parliament from right across this land. They do this to better inspire their students, to better inform and educate the next generation of voters and Canadian citizens as to the meaning of our democratic institutions, as to their proper place and, indeed, for their responsibilities.

Teachers are mentors and guides to our young people at some of the most critical times in their lives. We celebrate the Teachers Institute and we celebrate our teachers. I say bravo.

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THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year on the first Wednesday in November, thousands of grade nine students participate in The Learning Partnership's take our kids to work program. Now in its 16th year, this program sees students take part in a daylong job shadowing experience at businesses and organizations across Canada.

This year, The Learning Partnership, in conjunction with the Scotiabank group, ran the second annual ultimate dream job contest to coincide with the take our kids to work program. This national online photo contest gave students the chance to prepare for the future by exploring their career opportunities.

This year's grand prize winner is Melanie Renn from Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, who was chosen by over 10,000 voters. Melanie's dream job is to become an archaeologist. Her thirst for knowledge and fascination with solving puzzles gave her entry the winning edge. As part of her grand prize, Melanie is in Ottawa today to meet with the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the House.

I congratulate Melanie and hope she enjoys her day.

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CANADIAN FORCES

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the solemn occasion of Remembrance Day and pay tribute to the sacrifices made by our veterans in times of war, let us not forget those members of our Canadian Forces who have returned from service and who are haunted by trauma, depression and anxiety.

Studies show that operational stress injuries can lead to long-term psychiatric conditions. Sadly, the mission in Afghanistan has also shown us these psychological consequences of combat.

In 2008, the military ombudsman made several recommendations on how the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces could further help Canadian soldiers and their families cope with the dangers of operational stress injuries. Last year, the Standing Committee on National Defence released another report making many similar recommendations.

On behalf of the Canadian Psychiatric Association, I urge the government to work harder to implement all of the remaining recommendations from these reports and, most specifically, those related to improving services and support to military families. The enduring sacrifice our soldiers have made while serving their country needs to be honoured.

CANADA-UKRAINE PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize 23 youthful delegates from Ukraine who have visited with us for the past two months. They are here in members' offices to gain valuable perspectives of Canada's most important democratic institution, the Parliament of Canada.

These young people, representing the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program, embody the highest ideals of achievement and community service. They are the future leaders of Ukraine, young people, like Solomia Borshosh, from my office.

Canada and Ukraine are inextricably linked forever by prior migration. Fully one in thirty Canadians are of Ukrainian descent, as are my wife, daughters and granddaughters.

Ukraine holds a special place in the hearts of Canadians. Canada was the first country in the western world to accord diplomatic recognition in 1991 to an independent Ukraine.

As the young emissaries depart, we wish them well and say to them:

[Member spoke in Ukrainian]

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• (1410)

[Translation]

JEAN-CHARLES BONENFANT FOUNDATION

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the presence on Parliament Hill of the 2010-11 recipients of the Fondation Jean-Charles-Bonenfant scholarships, who have come to find out how the Canadian Parliament works.

Each year, the foundation gives five young Quebec university graduates the opportunity to participate in a 10-month internship at the Quebec National Assembly. This placement gives them behind-the-scenes experience with the parliamentary system and a chance to learn about the members' duties.

This initiative also honours the memory of Jean-Charles Bonenfant and his outstanding contribution to public knowledge of our democratic institutions.

Their presence here demonstrates their interest in our political institutions and, who knows, perhaps they will replace some of us here one day.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to welcome the young Quebec university graduates, Évelyne, Alex, Dominic, Loïc and Guillaume. We hope that your time here will be most enriching.

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[English]

NATIONAL 4-H MONTH

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, National 4-H Month kicks off with the annual "Show your Colours Day" starting November 3.

Statements by Members

This government is a proud supporter of 4-H and its contribution towards Canadian agriculture. In budget 2010, we announced an additional \$3 million in support of 4-H.

I was a member in the Kneehill Valley 4-H Beef Club growing up and I will never forget our 4-H motto: head, heart, hands and health. The mandate of 4-H has never changed as it still inspires our youth to become leaders in our communities.

Thousands of Canadians across Canada, like me and many of my rural colleagues, were given opportunities through 4-H to grow from personal competition.

4-H has a long history of developing responsible citizens and building confidence in our youth. This is why this government will continue to support them.

I would like to congratulate all 4-H members and the 4-H council for their great work and to wish them good luck in showing their colours.

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[*Translation*]

IRAQ

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 30, 2010, 50 women and children belonging to the Syrian Catholic community of Baghdad were brutally slaughtered along with two young priests. Twenty more people were seriously wounded. Members of the Syrian Catholic community from all over the world now living in Laval, Montreal, Toronto and elsewhere in Canada are deeply concerned about what could happen to Christians living in Iraq.

We are asking the Government of Canada to waste no time intervening with the Iraqi government to ensure the safety of Christians caught in the crossfire, thereby showing the world that fighting for human rights means more than just words.

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[*English*]

NATIONAL SENIORS SAFETY WEEK

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week marks National Seniors Safety Week, sponsored by the Canadian Safety Council. This year's theme is "Preventing Elder Abuse" and it provides an opportunity for Canadians to learn more about elder abuse and about the safety precautions that seniors can take.

Recently our government launched the second phase of a national awareness campaign entitled "Elder Abuse: It's Time to Face the Reality". This important campaign will run until December.

Estimates suggest that between 4% and 10% of seniors in Canada experience some kind of abuse, but we know that elder abuse is often hidden and under-reported. Forms of abuse include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial and neglect. Seniors from all walks of life are vulnerable to abuse.

I encourage all Canadians to take the time to educate themselves about the signs and symptoms of elder abuse. We should all take

active measures to detect and prevent the exploitation of older Canadians.

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WOMAN ABUSE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, November is Woman Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month in the province of Ontario. This year the London Abused Women's Centre has launched a new fall campaign called "Shine the Light on Woman Abuse".

Too often the issue of woman abuse and violence against women has been greeted with silence. The London Abused Women's Centre is determined to put a purple spotlight on this issue so Canadians can continue on the path to open discussion and positive action. In addition to the many activities planned for November, the agency's goal is to raise awareness by turning the city of London purple throughout the entire month.

Purple is a symbol of courage, survival and honour and has come to symbolize the fight to end woman abuse. LAWC is encouraging local businesses, schools, churches and neighbourhoods to decorate their stores, offices, classrooms, places of worship and homes with purple lights, balloons, streamers, simply anything purple.

Please remember that November 15 has been designated as wear purple day.

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● (1415)

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government supports safer streets and communities. Today, the Minister of Justice announced that our government is taking a number of steps to protect children from sexual predators.

[*Translation*]

The Conservative government is committed to making our streets and communities safer for Canadian families. The government is confirming today that it has written to Craigslist officials, asking them to remove classified ads for erotic services from their Canadian websites.

[*English*]

We are concerned that such advertisements may be facilitating serious criminal offences, such as living off the avails of child prostitution and trafficking in persons. It is important to note that these ads have already been removed from the American Craigslist website and other large competitors have also removed them.

Our government is committed to taking action to protect children.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR FEDERATION OF FRANCOPHONES**

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 29 and 30, 2010, I attended the 37th annual general meeting of the Fédération des francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador at the Centre scolaire et communautaire Sainte-Anne in Grand'Terre on the Port au Port peninsula.

The challenges ahead are considerable; rampant assimilation, the exodus of young people, the lack of resources, and difficulty recruiting and retaining staff are some that come to mind.

Also on the agenda was the unveiling of the very impressive Acadian Odyssey commemorative monument at the Boutte du Cap Park in Cape St. George.

Françoise Enguehard, a writer and president of the Société nationale de l'Acadie, enlightened us about the francophone presence in Newfoundland since 1504.

The Bloc Québécois would like to congratulate the president of the FFTNL, Jules Custodio, and all the members of his team, who work tirelessly to ensure that Franco-Newfoundlanders' and Franco-Labradorians' language and culture continue to flourish.

Long live the FFTNL.

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*[English]***MEDIA LITERACY WEEK**

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Marshall McLuhan wrote, "New media are not just mechanical gimmicks for creating worlds of illusion, but new languages with new and unique powers of expression".

[Translation]

This week we are celebrating the fifth annual Media Literacy Week.

Media literacy has evolved with the arrival of cyberspace. Are these new technologies enriching or impoverishing our culture, knowledge and sense of community? What challenges come with regulating a borderless medium like the Internet?

This year's theme deals with gender stereotypes in the media. Despite many accomplishments, sexist prejudices against women still exist in the media, so we need to constantly re-evaluate what we read, what we say and what we write. As public figures, we must be leaders in the fight against gender stereotypes.

[English]

The challenges surrounding media's transformative capacity is not something to fear, but to acknowledge, for as McLuhan also said, "We become what we behold. We shape our tool and then our tools shape us".

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is standing up for new immigrants who choose to come to Canada; the immigrants who make the choice to work hard and play by the rules. Our Conservative government stands up for immigrants who choose to make a home in Canada.

The Liberal leader's immigration spokesman wants to have it both ways. Instead of telling Canadians whether they support more, less or stable levels of immigration, the Liberals opportunistically adopted every position possible and hoped no one would notice.

This week the Liberal immigration spokesman said that Canada should not raise immigration levels. He then said the opposite, saying that the government should raise immigration levels.

On immigration and the economy, the Liberals are all error, all opportunism, all the time. The Liberal leader is not in it for Canadians or new immigrants; he is in it for himself.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***POTASH INDUSTRY**

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, when I asked the Prime Minister to block the sale of PotashCorp, he replied that it did not matter whether it was American-controlled or Australian-controlled. He is wrong. Canadians do not wish to lose control of their strategic resources. The government is being hesitant, evasive and contradictory.

When will the government assume its responsibilities and say no to the sale of PotashCorp?

● (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's position is clear: we obey the law. The government must listen to all parties interested in this transaction before it makes a decision. Obviously, it is not a simple transaction. I am confident that the minister will make a decision that is in the best interests of Canada in the long term.

[English]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this takeover deal has been mishandled from the beginning.

The Prime Minister said in the House that it was a proposal for an American-controlled company to be taken over by an Australian-controlled company, which is patently false. Everyone in Saskatchewan knows that this takeover will put at risk jobs, head offices and revenue for the government of Saskatchewan.

When will the government listen to Saskatchewan, listen to the prairie provinces, listen perhaps to members of his caucus and say no to the potash deal?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a fascinating position from a party that did not just approve some transactions, did not just approve most transactions, but rubber-stamped every transaction for 13 years.

Oral Questions

As we have said repeatedly, the government has been listening to all the facts of the issue from all the interested parties. Obviously there are very passionate views in many quarters on this. After having listened and having done his proper due diligence, I am confident the Minister of Industry will come out with a decision later today that reflects the best long-term interests of the Canadian economy.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what sets this deal apart is it is the largest resource takeover deal in Canadian history and the government has been all over the place on this issue. It has sometimes hinted yes, then it has hinted yes, but with conditions.

Why does the government not understand that the only answer that will serve the interests of Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan, the Prairies and the future resource development in Canada is a simple word, no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a fascinating position from a party that no matter how large previous transactions were, it rubber-stamped them all.

The fact is, as we have said, the government has taken no position. The government has taken all of the time necessary to ensure it listens to all parties in this issue. Unlike the rubber-stamp policies of the previous government or the anti-foreign investment policies of the NDP, this government will make a considered decision that is in the best interests of the Canadian economy.

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[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on another matter, for four years, the Prime Minister has been saying that we can do nothing about climate change until there is an action plan from Washington. The Minister of the Environment has confirmed that after yesterday's results, we cannot expect much from Washington.

When will this government stop following the Americans and give us a Canadian plan on climate change?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is dealing with climate change in three ways. There are national actions; we are investing a great deal in green technologies. There are continental approaches that some of our industries need. We are also taking a global approach; we are part of the Copenhagen accord. I still do not know the Liberal Party's position on this international accord.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have this problem on the environment, but we also have the same problem on defence procurement.

This side of the House has called for a competitive bid on the joint strike fighter. When we ask for that, the other side says the competitive deal was done in Washington. That is not good enough.

Canadian taxpayers want a competitive bid for the joint strike fighter. When will the Prime Minister realize that? When will he make amends for his \$16 billion mistake?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, not only was there a competitive process to select this aircraft, but the previous government put money into the development of the aircraft for the Canadian military. That is the position.

We are going to need to replace the aircraft at the end of this decade, and the party opposite knows that. But instead, for the sake of getting the anti-military vote on the left, with the NDP and the Bloc, the Liberals are playing this game.

The mistake is theirs. It would be a mistake to rip up this contract for our men and women in uniform as well as the aerospace industry.

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[Translation]

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its submission to the Quebec Court of Appeal, the Conservative government boasts that its proposed Canada-wide securities commission is evidence of co-operative, flexible federalism.

But if the government is so flexible, why is it trying to encroach on Quebec's jurisdictions at all costs? Why is the Prime Minister trying to destroy a system that is functioning well, just to impose his Canada-wide securities commission?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a completely co-operative and voluntary initiative. There are 10 jurisdictions that want to participate in a Canada-wide system. They have that choice. Quebec and certain others have chosen not to and the government respects that choice.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by moving ahead with a Canada-wide securities commission, the Prime Minister is going against Quebec's National Assembly, unions and Quebec's business community. Everyone agrees that the current systems works.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the only flexibility he has shown on this issue is to have found close to \$157 million to spend on touting Toronto as the headquarters for the future Canada-wide securities commission?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the headquarters has not yet been chosen. The minister has been clear: the system will be decentralized. That is what the 10 jurisdictions that are participating expect.

Oral Questions

[English]

Let me be very clear. Of course Quebec has the right not to participate, to run its own system. But the Bloc Québécois has no right to tell other provinces how to run their jurisdictions.

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[Translation]

HARMONIZED SALES TAX

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the harmonization of sales taxes, which is depriving Quebec of \$2.2 billion, is another example of the government's double standard. While Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland will receive \$7 billion, the Government of Quebec, which harmonized its tax 18 years ago, has yet to be compensated.

Everyone else is being compensated, but the government is refusing to do the same for Quebec.

Is that what the government calls flexible federalism?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in talks with Quebec's finance minister. I spoke to the minister this week. Progress has been made, but there are still a number of important issues to resolve.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, speaking of flexibility, Bruce Flexman, from the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, citing Ontario's Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity, maintained that Quebec harmonized its sales tax with the federal sales tax a long time ago.

When will the Minister of Finance listen to the independent professional opinions of two major institutions that say Quebec harmonized its sales tax, and when will he pay the \$2.2 billion Quebec has been owed for 18 years? If the government wants flexible federalism, it should start by paying its debts.

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have had continuing discussions with Quebec's minister of finance. I spoke to him, in fact, earlier this week on this subject and some other subjects.

Our negotiations are continuing. We are negotiating in good faith. It is a unique situation in Quebec, because the QST, a value-added tax, is completely separate and different from the GST. But we have made some progress, and I hope we will continue to make progress on the subject.

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● (1430)

POTASH INDUSTRY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago, the Prime Minister trivialized our questions regarding the takeover of the potash industry in Saskatchewan. In his response, he dismissed our questions, saying that it was the takeover of an American corporation by an Australian corporation. Following this callous answer, his MPs started cheering from the backbenches.

Does he still stand by those rash words, or has he actually listened to the people of Saskatchewan and to the majority of Canadians? Will he finally say no to the sellout of our potash industry?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one will evaluate such transactions on the facts. Facts are facts. The minister and the government have been listening to a range of views, as they are expected to do under the law.

The opposition chases one set of rumours one day and another set of rumours on another day. After due consideration, the Minister of Industry will make his position known later today. I am confident that this position will be in the best long-term interests of the Canadian economy.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are a little misguided with respect to foreign takeovers. PotashCorp is one example. There is no transparency, and people are not getting a chance to be heard. The government cannot keep holding these fire sales.

Will the Prime Minister at least admit that the process is not working, that it is not good and that it should be changed? Will he admit it, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the process is set out in legislation. The member is saying that he wants to review this legislation. That is an interesting suggestion, but right now, the government must comply with the legislation. The NDP's position is to oppose any foreign investment. The government will evaluate this proposal in the best interests of the Canadian economy.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course investment that brings jobs and innovation and that is good for Canada should be supported. We have done so, and we will continue to do so.

However, the toothless conditions established by the Liberal government once upon a time, and maintained by the Conservative government now, simply make us a laughingstock. They make us a sitting duck for hostile takeover bids. That is why many Canadian business people are speaking out against this sell-off.

Would Australia ever let Potash Corporation take over BHP? Would Brazil let Inco take over Vale? Of course not. When will we see some action?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP makes an interesting observation, as I did earlier. Just as I remember that the Liberal government rubber-stamped all such transactions for 13 years, I cannot for the life of me remember an instance where the NDP ever favoured a foreign investment.

Whether right or wrong, there is a process and the government is following the process. The government has listened to all interested parties. The government will not automatically say no or automatically say yes to every single investment, unlike the parties opposite. The government will make its evaluation in the best long-term interests of the Canadian economy.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Parliamentary Budget Officer slammed the Conservatives' budget projections, saying there is only a 12% chance that the finance minister will actually meet his deficit targets.

In 2015, the PBO estimates an \$11 billion deficit, while this finance minister is promising Canadians a \$2.6 billion surplus. Do Canadians not deserve better than a finance minister who cannot count and a Prime Minister who can only divide?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we base our estimates and forecasts on the analyses of 15 private-sector forecasters. In fact, we took a risk for adjustment downward from their predictions. The PBO is in disagreement with all of them. Here is what he said in August, just a few months ago: "The sharp rebound from recession could put the federal government on the road to balancing its books a year ahead of schedule".

All of a sudden, he is singing a different tune and disagreeing with the economists in this country.

• (1435)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget officer is also saying that the current minister is under-estimating his deficit numbers by \$32 billion over the next five years. It is little wonder, with all the waste on high-priced consultants, untended stealth jets, U.S.-style megaprisons, and G20 photo ops.

The budget officer also complains that the minister will not provide him with a credible plan to balance the books.

Is it because this wasteful minister does not have a real plan to balance the books?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the plan is in the economic and fiscal update, as it was in the budget this year, as it was in the budget last year. We are on track and we are going to stay the course.

I know the Parliamentary Budget Officer thinks differently, but the IMF has something else to say. Just last week, not back in August, the IMF said that "the framework laid out in the Update of Economic and Fiscal Projections uses appropriately conservative adjustments to its near-term growth assumptions in light of uncertainties about the economic outlook".

That is the IMF looking at Canada last week.

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GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over a month ago, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development insulted Canadian caregivers by saying the best way for them to take care of loved ones was to take vacation time. Almost three million Canadians, at this very moment, are taking care of sick relatives. Families are struggling with cancer, Alzheimer's, ALS, dementia, Parkinson's, and MS. It is a profoundly difficult time in their lives. Rather than offer them help, the current minister offers insensitivity.

Would the minister retract her comments, come to her senses, and offer Canadians real solutions?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very sensitive to the needs of those who are caring for family members or are going through a serious illness themselves. That is why we have expanded the eligibility for people to claim benefits, to take time off to spend with their loved ones.

We have also expanded the number of people eligible to qualify for those benefits by making EI special benefits, including compassionate care and sickness leave, available to the self-employed.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the current government is clearly out of touch. First the Prime Minister calls investments in family care reckless. Then his minister tells caregivers to just take vacation time. Families deserve more respect for their hard work and commitment to caring for their loved ones.

The solutions are not complicated, and they are not overly costly, especially when compared with \$16 billion for untended jet fighters or billions more for prisons and summit expenses.

Will the minister come to her senses and offer at least one helpful solution for Canadians?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have tried to make it easier for those who are suffering from disease and illness or who are trying to look after loved ones, whether they be older or younger. We have assisted them in taking time off to provide the attention and emotional support that their loved ones need.

We have done that through a number of means, including making more people eligible to provide compassionate care and claim compassionate care leave. We have also extended the original benefits to the self-employed, which is something that the previous Liberal government never did.

We also brought in the registered disability savings plan to help families look after their loved ones in the long term.

* * *

[Translation]

HYDROELECTRICITY

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that he would listen to the provinces that want him to subsidize their power grids. He did not say no to federal funding for the subsea electric cable between Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. The federal government did not contribute a penny to Quebec for hydroelectricity, but now it is planning to subsidize power grids in provinces that would compete with Quebec.

Oral Questions

Is that what the Prime Minister means by flexible federalism?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member is referring to an application for a project that is at PPP Canada Inc.

PPP Canada Inc. is arm's length from government. It is a crown corporation. It assesses each application on its merits. It does not take direction from the government on its assessment of applications, including this one, which I understand is from Newfoundland and Labrador.

• (1440)

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fact that Hydro One revenues are not treated the same way as Hydro-Québec revenues proves that flexible federalism is bad for Quebec. Hydro-Québec's revenues are included in the equalization formula, but some of Ontario company Hydro One's revenues are excluded on the grounds that the company simply transmits electricity.

How can the government treat revenues generated by identical activities differently? Is that what it means by flexible federalism?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the difference is that Hydro One only does transmission work. That is the difference between the two systems.

That said, with respect to the question raised by the member, Quebec also, with others, has made applications for P3 projects at PPP Canada Inc. So have other provinces. It is a very good mechanism for financing important public infrastructure in our country.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, comments by the Minister of International Trade about negotiations between Canada and the European Union are creating uncertainty about his true determination to defend the cultural exemption that Quebec is calling for. The minister has a casual attitude toward all this and says he is not really concerned about a possible Lithuanian culture invasion.

Instead of downplaying something that is so important to Quebec, would the minister not be better off committing to strongly defending the cultural exemption as proposed by the Government of Quebec?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, we intend to defend the interests of cultural communities, with a cultural exemption for industries in Canada, in the negotiations with the European Union. Nonetheless, the greatest benefit coming out of this agreement is economic growth to the tune of \$12 billion a year. This is a huge opportunity for all workers in Canada and Quebec. We are pleased to provide such an opportunity to Quebeckers.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, access to government contracts is a key issue in the

discussions with the European Union. The European Union already has exceptions to allow member countries to protect their government contracts. Defence, public monopolies and disadvantaged regions are protected.

Can the minister assure us that the exemptions that apply to members of the European Union will apply to Quebec and Canada?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this time, for the first time in Canadian history and in the history of such free trade negotiations, the provinces and territories are at the negotiating table. We are able to defend these interests at the table during these negotiations, and things are going quite well. We are pleased with the progress of the negotiations, and we are sure we will have a free trade agreement with the European Union by the end of 2011.

* * *

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the most junior assistant to the most junior minister must go through a cooling-off period before going to the private sector. However, the new chief of staff for the big boss is being given special treatment by the Prime Minister and exempted from this requirement. This shows a total lack of judgment on the part of the Prime Minister. Mr. Wright will keep one foot in the private sector and the other in the Prime Minister's Office.

Why is the Prime Minister creating this blatant conflict of interest at the highest level of his own office?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Wright has sought and followed all of the advice of the independent Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He will continue to do that. He will respect all the rules that apply to ministerial staff and recuse himself when necessary.

We should be celebrating that someone successful in the private sector is prepared to put aside a career and come to Ottawa to make a contribution to Canada. Is that not good?

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the so-called wall is as thin as a piece of paper. Nigel Wright has interests in Cineplex cinemas and in Indigo bookstores. When they talk about copyright next week, will he really plug his ears?

He has interests in private health care companies. Will he leave the room when they discuss the future of health care? Everyone knows the answer. No he will not.

Why is the Prime Minister treating Canadians like a bunch of fools?

Oral Questions

● (1445)

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were so many things in the preamble to that question, but I can say this. The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner recently appeared before a parliamentary committee. She reported that she has been very vigilant on conflict of interest issues, and I can confirm that Mr. Wright has sought and will continue to follow the direction of the independent Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Nigel Wright's appointment as the Prime Minister's temporary chief of staff keeps raising more and more ethical questions. How does a guy who makes auto parts deal with General Motors? How does a guy who manufactures plastic bottles deal with regulating BPA? How does a guy with interests in four private health care companies deal with the health file? No answers have been forthcoming.

Is the Prime Minister blind to these conflicts or is it just another case of him making the rules?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I say to the member for Malpeque that I am very happy to debate ethical issues with him any time, any place.

Let me say this. Mr. Wright has sought the counsel and advice of the independent Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He is complying with all of the direction that she has set. Under this government we made that office legislatively independent. That Ethics Commissioner does not work directly for the Prime Minister.

Those are the high ethical standards that this government has exhibited since we took office and brought in the Federal Accountability Act, the act that finally cleaned up the ethical mess that we found from the previous Liberal government.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Mr. Wright said the reason for his special deal is that he wants to keep his stock options. In fact, he would not consider public service if he had to give up his stock options the way a minister or senior political staffers do. Bringing private sector experience into politics is one thing, but when somebody makes a commitment to the public service, he or she needs to fully commit.

Why are the Conservatives letting Mr. Wright set one foot in the PMO while his other foot is firmly rooted in corporate boardrooms? Where was the Prime Minister's judgment?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was this government, as its first priority, that brought in the Federal Accountability Act, some of the toughest ethics reforms we have seen in Canadian history. We are always reaching to do better on ethical grounds. That is why Mr. Wright has consulted with the independent Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He is following all of that advice and will continue to do so.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's immigrant communities

are lining up to voice their support for Bill C-49, our crackdown on human smuggling bill. The Liberals and the NDP, on the other hand, have not made their positions on this bill clear. Last week the Liberals said they would take time to speak with the experts, and the NDP claimed that it did not want to be soft on crime.

I want to know if the opposition parties are going to support this important piece of legislation or if they are going to allow human smugglers to think they can treat Canada as their doormat.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the opposition but I do know what Canadians think. The vast majority of Canadians say that they expect this Parliament to take firm action to stop smugglers from targeting Canada and treating this country like a doormat, from undermining the fairness and integrity of our immigration system.

I would like to say to my opposition colleagues that we all have a responsibility to maintain public support for our immigration and refugee protection systems, support that has been undermined by the targeting of Canada by the smugglers. Bill C-49 represents a strong but fair and reasonable effort to crack down on the smugglers and we expect the opposition to support that bill.

* * *

HARMONIZED SALES TAX

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the premier of B.C. has just stepped down because of the failed HST, but we all know that the HST was imposed by the Conservative government. I want to ask the Prime Minister, when will his government listen to the people of B.C. and take responsibility for its failure on the HST?

● (1450)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, provincial taxation is, of course, a provincial responsibility and the decisions are made by the provinces themselves.

Some of the Atlantic provinces made a decision 12 or 13 years ago on that subject, and Ontario and British Columbia made a decision more recently. These are choices for the provincial governments themselves.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is way too late for that kind of line.

Everybody knows the premier of British Columbia just resigned because of the failure of the HST, a fiasco caused by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

The question is very straightforward. Are they willing to take responsibility and admit that they, too, failed the people of British Columbia?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we wish Premier Gordon Campbell well in his retirement.

All across British Columbia, the phone lines are buzzing. The Minister of Transport has been getting all kinds of email wanting him to run for premier of British Columbia. I need all members to stand with me and say to him, "We need to keep you here in Ottawa". We need to keep him in the federal cabinet.

* * *

[Translation]

QUEBEC CITY ARENA

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in an interview last weekend, the minister responsible for the Quebec City region was not able to commit to meeting the December 31 deadline set by Mayor Labeaume concerning the multi-use arena in Quebec City. However, she says she is "working" on the file.

How can the minister claim to be moving the arena project forward when she cannot meet the mayor's deadline or set up a simple meeting between the mayor and the Prime Minister?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the various stakeholders in the Quebec City region know full well how much this file means to my colleagues and me. As we have said, while we are all huge fans of professional sports, this is primarily a matter for the private sector.

As for the mayor's deadline, we continue to work in close collaboration with elected officials from the Quebec City region. That said, the federal government also has its own deadlines.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister that we are talking about a multi-use arena.

Quebec City and the Government of Quebec have already committed to funding it. They are waiting for the federal government to commit, as Quebec has done, to funding 45% of the construction costs. An answer is expected by December 31.

What is the Conservative government waiting for to announce that it will do its part and fund 45% of the construction costs of Quebec City's multi-use arena?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we all understand that it is a multi-use arena. That said, as we have stated, if the government were to contribute to a project of this size, it would do so in a fair and affordable manner throughout the country.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the public accounts were released.

What a tale of out-of-control spending they tell: \$3 billion more on professional and special services since the Conservatives became government; \$9.5 million more on cabinet since 2007; and \$2.5 million more on the Prime Minister's office.

At a time when Canadians have had to make hard economic choices, their government chose more spending on press releases, management consultants and cabinet. When will this borrow and spend government get its reckless spending under control?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that there were unprecedented demands on the government, especially last year, whether we are talking about the Olympics, the unprecedented nature of the H1N1 epidemic, or the G8 and G20, a number of things that do not occur on a usual basis.

It is unfortunate that the opposition does not reflect on the fact that all government operational spending is now frozen for three years, all ministerial and MP salaries are frozen for three years, and all ministerial budgets for next year have been reduced by \$11 million. It is too bad the member did not mention that.

● (1455)

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are told is that the increases for the PMO are for communication, yet the Prime Minister has not had a single public meeting since taking office.

Instead of giving fiscal updates to the House of Commons, he wasted \$250,000 to hold two closed press conferences. The PBO now estimates that the Conservatives have added \$210 billion to the national debt. With all due respect to drunken sailors, this government is spending like one.

When will the Conservatives stop wasting hard-earned taxpayers' money?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just found today an area where we could cut some wasteful government spending.

We have learned today that a member of the Liberal caucus has spent \$700,000 over the last three years, despite the fact that he was suspended from the Senate three years ago. That is \$700,000 of taxpayers' money for travelling and office expenses to keep a senator who has been suspended and has not worked for one minute. Maybe the Liberal caucus could look into that.

* * *

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do you know what foreign takeovers have meant to my community?

Two of Canada's most profitable companies, Inco and Falconbridge, were taken over by international mining giants. Hundreds of jobs were lost. Pensions were attacked. Wages were cut. Workers were forced into the longest strike in history. That is how Xstrata's and Vale's takeovers worked.

How is that a net benefit to Sudbury?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the recession has been hard on a number of communities, including Sudbury. That is why this government has approved many different infrastructure projects for the city of Sudbury, working with municipal officials. We have also deployed the community action fund for the city of Sudbury to make sure that we can grow new jobs, new opportunities in new areas as well as some of the tried and trusted areas where Sudbury has a competitive advantage.

We care about these issues. We care about the people who are affected by them. That is why we have acted through the economic action plan, and those members voted against it every single time.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservative government rubber-stamped Xstrata's takeover of Falconbridge, we had a world-class copper and zinc refining capacity in Ontario. What happened after the takeover? We lost 1,000 jobs in Timmins. The copper refinery was shut down. The ore was shipped out to other jurisdictions. That is how Xstrata's takeover has worked, so God help the people of Saskatchewan if they are looking to the Tories for help with potash.

Where was the net benefit to the people of Timmins when the government sold them out?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know where the hon. member was when the mining industry needed some help to defeat a bill that would have hobbled them on world markets. He was not in his seat defending the interests of his community or the mining sector. He was not defending the interests of his rural constituents when it came to the long gun registry.

He has a lot to answer for. We have nothing to answer for.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this time of continuing economic uncertainty, our Conservative government is continually striving to create jobs, boost trade and open new markets for Canadian workers. We stand in contrast to the Liberal-led coalition that continually promotes policies that kill Canadian jobs, such as their support of Bill C-300 or their promise to cancel the purchase of F-35s.

Could the Minister of International Trade update this House on Canada's ambitious free trade agenda and how it will benefit Canada's economy?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is clearly focused on the economy, on creating jobs and growth for the benefit of Canadian workers and Canadian families. An important way to do that is through securing access in foreign markets.

Oral Questions

The predecessor Liberal government in 13 long years only did three small free trade agreements, all of which we are now upgrading. In contrast, in four years we have already delivered eight new free trade agreements and are in talks with 50 other countries, including the cornerstone, a free trade agreement with the European Union which stands to deliver an annual boost of \$12 billion to Canada's economy, in fact creating hundreds of thousands of jobs, tremendous prosperity for Canadians and millions in growth. It is great for Canada.

* * *

● (1500)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Giselle from Lanark sent me an email. She wrote:

It will take more than 10 minutes per photo to download because...yes...yes...I'm still on Dial-up. Hard to believe in this day and age that being 110km from our great capital...I don't even have access to High Speed yet...Even cell phones and BBerry's don't get the signal.

Can you imagine...can you do something for me

Why is it that the Prime Minister ordered that millions of dollars be spent to track 9,000 propaganda signs by GPS but cannot find the money to help Giselle?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has acted to bridge the gap between rural and urban Canadians when it comes to broadband. We have, as part of our economic action plan, a \$225 million fund to ensure that we can help bridge that gap.

Where were those hon. members then? Where were they looking out for those kinds of issues? Where was the hon. member when the long gun registry vote occurred in the House? He was voting against his rural constituents in favour of the Toronto elites. We will not do that to rural Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, the Conservative government promised to speed up the processing of applications for permanent residence in the context of the special Quebec-Haiti humanitarian sponsorship program. Yet as of October 16, 2010, only 18 Haitians had come to Quebec.

How does the immigration minister explain the fact that, despite his promise to cut red tape, now, 10 months later, only 18 Haitians have come to Quebec through that special program?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud of how it responded to the crisis in Haiti, including in the area of immigration. We are going to grant temporary status to all Haitians who were in Canada at the time of the earthquake. We have sped up the processing of family sponsorship applications. Over 2,000 have been completed. It is true that the Quebec government created its own program. We just began receiving applications from people who went through the Quebec program. I have no control over the Quebec procedures.

* * *

[English]

STEEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what foreign takeovers have meant to my community. U.S. Steel took over Stelco. The result? It shut down the blast furnace and now no steel is being made; 800 jobs were slashed; the remaining employees are being threatened with a lockout; and the workers who put the value into this company have been abandoned by both the foreign owners and the government.

Due diligence has to happen at the front end. Taking U.S. Steel to court after the fact did not save jobs and it did not save production. How is that a net benefit for Hamilton?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is correct. We are the first government in the history of the Investment Canada Act to actually take a company to court to enforce the undertakings that it promised with the government and the people of Canada. We did that. No one else has done that. Certainly the Liberals when they were in power never did that.

The hon. member neglects all the other great things we have done for the Hamilton area when it comes to investing in new jobs, investing in research, investing in new opportunities for Hamilton. We have done that and every single time the member stood in her place and voted against the interests of Hamilton.

* * *

COPYRIGHT

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to modernizing our copyright laws to protect Canadian jobs and ensure we remain a leader in today's digital economy. Unfortunately, the only proposal that has been brought forward by the coalition partners is a new tax that would make Canadians pay every time they purchased an iPod, an MP3 player, computer, any device that plays music.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House what our position is on this tax on consumers?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last summer when the Minister of Industry and I went across the country and had consultations and got ideas for our new copyright legislation, we listened to a lot of great ideas that led to our balanced and responsible copyright reform.

What we have rejected is what the coalition opposite is proposing which is a brand new \$75 tax on every iPod, iPhone, cell phone, BlackBerry, laptop computer in the country, which would hurt consumers, hurt students, hurt young Canadians in a way that is absolutely counterintuitive to having modern copyright legislation. Making it more expensive for Canadians to consume Canadian culture goes counter to the interests of Canada's cultural communities. It punishes consumers and hurts Canadians.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 700,000 Canadians in our rural areas do not have access to high-speed Internet. Northern Ontario is particularly affected. Students cannot do their homework and businesses cannot compete with their counterparts in major cities. The Conservatives are leaving northern Ontario behind, as though only big cities belonged in the 21st century.

When will they invest in our rural areas and in equality, and ensure access to high-speed Internet service for all Canadians?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, we announced subsidies for Internet infrastructure. Part of our economic action plan supports Canadians living in rural areas.

[English]

Again, the hon. member cannot lose the responsibility for voting against the interests of his constituency when it came to the long gun registry. That is when voters in his riding wanted him to stand in his place and reflect rural values, and he failed miserably.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Mircea Geoana, President of the Senate of Romania.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: On the occasion of Veterans' Week, I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the ladies' gallery of Canadian war veterans, peacekeepers and a retired member of the military, namely Mr. Domonic Patafie, a veteran of the second world war; Mr. Dave Jones, a veteran of the Korean War; Mr. Alfie Bojalil, a peacekeeping veteran; and Major Dee Brasseur, a retired senior officer of the Canadian Forces.

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to remind hon. members of a special screening of the CBC-Radio Canada's upcoming Remembrance Day documentary, *We Will Remember Them, Pour ne pas les oublier* in room 216 starting shortly.

[Translation]

I invite all hon. members to join me in that room for this event.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

In the interest of maintaining accuracy in this place, I know that the Minister of International Trade in his intervention in question period referred to three very minor free trade agreements signed by the previous Liberal government. They include of course the NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and as well the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, two of the hallmark free trade agreements signed by any Government of Canada.

I am sure he will want to acknowledge that as well.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was in fact referring to the Canada-Israel trade agreement and those with Costa Rica and Chile, all of which I am very pleased to report we are now upgrading from minor first-tier basic free trade agreements to much broader ambitious comprehensive free trade agreements.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1510)

[English]

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, 93 departmental performance reports on behalf of 95 federal organizations.

[Translation]

I also have the honour of tabling the companion document entitled "Canada's Performance", in both official languages.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 10 petitions.

[Translation]

VETERANS

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in many ways, Canadians owe their immense freedom to the courageous men and women who have always been ready to defend our values and our way of life.

As Canadians, it is our solemn duty never to forget the sacrifices and achievements of our veterans.

As we get ready to celebrate Veterans' Week in Canada, which will be held from November 5 to 11, it is important to commemorate and honour with respect and recognition the generations of soldiers who have sacrificed so much for us.

[English]

This past year, Canada's last first world war veteran, Mr. John Babcock, passed away. With this milestone in our collective history, we are reminded of the importance of keeping the memories of our veterans alive. We must always cherish the bravery and achievements of those who left their mark during events like the South African war, the first and second world wars and the Korean War. We must always recognize the sacrifices and successes of peace-keeping missions and military operations, such as in the Suez, in Bosnia and today in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Canadian veterans are our nation's heroes. We will be in their debt forever.

As we take time to reflect on our veterans' achievements and sacrifices, we must also consider the horrors of war that these men and women have witnessed and been thrown into. Some of them returned home physically and psychologically wounded. Our government is here to support them when they need our help to overcome the terrible effects of war.

We owe these courageous men and women tremendous gratitude. I urge everyone to think about the basic human values of freedom, democracy and tolerance that we enjoy every day.

Now, I would ask everyone to stop for a moment and look at our veterans. We live in the Canada we know today thanks to these people who defended our values and our freedom.

Some faced great danger to vanquish the demons of tyranny and terrorism. Others helped keep entire populations safe under United Nations command. But all veterans served with sincere devotion and admirable courage, as do the current members of Canada's armed forces.

Routine Proceedings

During World War I, a young nation sent 650,000 decent citizens to take up arms on its behalf. Just two decades later, during World War II, Canadians were once again called upon to fight tyranny. Then several years later, Canadians answered the call in Korea. For the past half-century, members of the Canadian Forces have carried on the tradition of participating in peacekeeping efforts around the world.

Today, our military members are returning from Afghanistan and other conflict zones. Some of them have overcome more trials in a few periods of active duty than most of us will in our lifetimes.

This week, in memory of those who have lost their lives and to those who have been physically and psychologically injured, as well as their family members and loved ones, we wish to say that, as the beneficiaries of their courage and determination, we will continue to honour the sacrifices they have made. We will never forget them.

We will remember their sacrifices, honour their achievements and respect the role they have played and continue to play in the story of our nation.

As we celebrate Veterans' Week, Canadians will make remembrance more than something they feel; they will make it something they do. Canadians young and old will pay tribute to veterans by attending Remembrance Day ceremonies. They will gather at the foot of a cenotaph or memorial and will proudly wear their poppies.

Let us again ask ourselves this question: how can we ever repay that debt? By remembering, yes, but also by serving our veterans as loyally as they served our country.

As a government, we are committed to improving their quality of life, and we are proving that by providing care and support to veterans and their families, when and where they need it.

Our government proudly supports Canadian veterans throughout their military careers and at every stage of their life. We recognize that the needs of these brave women and men have changed over time, especially in recent years. That is why the programs and services offered have also changed.

Our government recently announced it would make \$2 billion in improvements to the new veterans charter to provide better support and care to our most seriously injured soldiers and to ensure that wounded or ill veterans receive an adequate monthly income.

• (1515)

[*English*]

We recently broadened our criteria to improve support for veterans suffering from ALS. Our government also established a legacy of care to improve the quality of life of injured Canadian Forces personnel and their families. These improvements offer very tangible progress in the care and support we all know our veterans deserve and are entitled to. It is absolutely the right thing to do.

[*Translation*]

During this week dedicated to our veterans, how will we remember? We must make remembrance more than something we feel; we must make it something we do. I urge everyone to remember not only in their thoughts, but also in their actions, to honour the

memory of the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice in order to give us a future.

We must think of the Canadians who lost their lives in combat: 68,000 during the first world war; 47,000 during the second world war; 516 during the Korean War; and 152 in Afghanistan.

[*English*]

I ask everyone to wear their respect for our veterans loud and proud. We must tell them we care. We must let them know they are very precious to us and that their service is a point of personal and national pride. We must show them and the world how important their sacrifice and achievements are to us individually and to Canada as a nation. It is the very least we can do.

N'oublions jamais.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House on behalf of my party to pay tribute to our veterans and thank them for fighting to defend Canadian values and the freedom of people in other countries. Many of us here in the House have the honour of having personal relationships with veterans. I would like to take a moment to share my own personal memory of one veteran.

When I was a child, I spent several summers with my uncle in Richmond, Quebec. It was with him that I visited the cenotaph in Richmond. My uncle had fought in the battle of Monte Cassino, in Italy. He was in the Calgary Highlanders regiment. He came to Canada as a political refugee, then he went to war for Canada. Every Remembrance Day, he was there at the Richmond war memorial taking the salute, because he was president of the local legion.

My uncle's story is similar to that of many veterans. Perhaps it is shared by other members in the House. I wanted to share my memories of my uncle to say that these are very personal matters. These are family and childhood memories, and that is why we, as a country, feel such a strong connection to the memory of the services and sacrifices of our veterans. Inscribed on the Richmond war memorial are the names of those who died in South Africa and in both world wars in Europe, as well as those who sacrificed their lives in Korea and in peacekeeping missions around the world.

Today our country is at war. We have lost 152 brave Canadians in Afghanistan. Since Remembrance Day last year, we have lost 19.

[*English*]

On Remembrance Day we inscribe the names of the fallen into the book of Canadian memory and we give thanks that they stood and fought for the values that are so dear to the hearts of all Canadians and which we defend daily in the House of Commons.

Routine Proceedings

Next week we will honour the veterans in legion halls and small cenotaphs across the country. I hope we will remember particularly our Métis and aboriginal veterans who fought so bravely for a country that did not always recognize their traditions and their history.

Today a new generation of veterans is returning from Afghanistan, sometimes injured in body, sometimes injured in mind. They represent the best of us and they deserve the best care that a grateful country can bestow on them.

All of those who serve in this House bear a special responsibility to our veterans because they defended the values of democracy, which we attempt, however imperfectly, to represent in our actions in this House.

We must do more than respect our veterans. We must, above all, listen to our veterans, especially when they tell us things we do not want to hear. We must listen in the legion halls across Canada. We must listen at the cenotaph next week. On Remembrance Day let us remember, let us respect and let us listen. They served us. We must serve them.

For our men and women serving abroad and for their families here at home, for those who have served our country in times of war and in times of peace, for the best, for the bravest of Canadians let us all join together across the divisions of partisan politics, the divides that seem so trivial, when we remember their sacrifice and the glory they have brought our country. We will remember. N'oublions jamais.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, each year we rise in the House out of a solemn duty of remembrance. We must not forget the sacrifice made by the women and men who donned a military uniform. Those who served in the military did not do so for personal glory or gain, but out of a sense of duty to their fellow citizens. That is why we are honouring them today. They sacrificed themselves out of a sense of duty. When the need arose, they went to the front to protect the vulnerable, maintain peace and support democracy. More than once, they had to leave their families and friends to go to a far-off country, be it France, Italy, Germany, North Korea, Bosnia, Somalia or Afghanistan. They always lived up to what was asked of them.

During Veterans' Week, it is our duty to remember. We must not forget the men and women who jeopardized their safety and their health and even paid the ultimate price—they gave their lives—to ensure that their mission was successful. This may be beyond the comprehension of those who have never served in the Canadian armed forces, but we must see it as an expression of honour. Every soldier accepts his or her mission with humility, determination and courage. In turn, we have the collective duty to remember.

Today, when we remember the men and women who donned uniforms, we remember the successful outcome of their missions, and we remember the arduous work done by soldiers to restore peace, security, freedom and equality in countries ravaged by war. I am thinking, for example, of Europe and Korea, where they not only fought against oppression and dictatorship, but they also gave hope to local populations by helping them to regain their freedom.

In this time of remembrance, we should think especially of our soldiers who are currently in Afghanistan or who have already served in this theatre of operations. They are our modern veterans. No matter what we think about the politics of the Afghan mission, we must recognize the work and sacrifices of these Quebec and Canadian soldiers.

We believe that we have a collective responsibility to the men and women who are our veterans. Once they have completed their service, it is our duty to look after them. That is why we must always concern ourselves with the support given to veterans, those who proudly wore a uniform. It is also why the military and veterans deserve all the resources we can give them to meet their health care needs, particularly those suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. All of us must remember because those who have gone to war will never forget.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud, on behalf of New Democrats from coast to coast to coast, to rise in the House of Commons to pay a special tribute to our veterans, RCMP veterans and their families.

We know that by the time we go to bed tonight, Canada will lose approximately another 100 heroes of World War II and Korea. If we include their families, that is another 160 people of that generation who will be lost to the aging process. It is these individuals, many before them, many who are serving today and many who will serve in the future, to whom we owe the greatest debt and gratitude.

We are able to sit in the House of Commons because they were the ones willing to risk their lives so we could live in a free, open and democratic society. As members of Parliament, whether we are in government or in opposition, we know that when these men and women sign up, they have unlimited liability. We in turn have the ultimate responsibility to their needs and their families needs, all the way to and including their headstones. That is the true sense of debt and gratitude paid for a debt that we can never fully repay for the sacrifices they made.

This year commemorates the postage stamp unveiling of a Mr. William Hall of Nova Scotia. William Hall was an African Nova Scotian. In the 1850s he was in Lucknow, India and because of his courageous efforts, he received the Victoria Cross. He was the very first black man and the very first sailor in Canadian history to receive the Victoria Cross. This year, everyone was honoured to see that his face was on a postage stamp to recognize his great efforts and what he had done.

Routine Proceedings

We also recognize the tremendous efforts of our first nations, Métis and Inuit individuals who served in the various wars and conflict. As many of us know, in World War II, many of them were exempt for service duty, but they signed up anyway, to not only serve their people but to serve this nation and to free the people in the rest of the world.

I was born in Holland. My father met a Canadian soldier and asked him why they had come over. In simple Canadian modest terms, that Canadian soldier told my father, "We had a job to do". My father told my mother, "If they have a military like that, can you imagine what kind of country they come from?" I know right now there are families in Afghanistan, in Haiti and around the world looking at our Canadian soldiers, our RCMP people and their families and also saying, "Imagine what kind of country they come from".

I would like to quote the words of the Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean, the former Governor General of Canada, when she was in Halifax at the Queen's Consecration of the Colours. She said that when she was a little girl in Haiti, she feared the uniform of that country. Yet she stood in front of thousands and said, "How proud I am to wear the Canadian uniform". No greater words can be said than that in recognition of our brave men and women who serve our wonderful country.

On behalf of all of us in the House, I pay a special tribute to all of those who are with us today, all of those who have served in the past, to the 118,000 who paid the ultimate sacrifice buried in over 70 countries around the world, to our current service personnel, RCMP personnel, and just as important, to their families. We say:

At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

God bless.

• (1530)

The Speaker: I invite hon. members to rise and observe a moment of silence in respect to the veterans who have served our country so ably.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

• (1535)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. In accordance with its order of reference of Tuesday, October 18, the committee has considered Bill C-28, An Act to promote the efficiency and adaptability of the Canadian economy by regulating certain activities that discourage reliance on electronic means of carrying out commercial activities, and to amend the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act, the Competition Act, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and the Telecommu-

nications Act, Fighting Internet and Wireless Spam Act, and agreed, on Tuesday, November 2, to report it with amendments.

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, on Bill C-471, An Act respecting the implementation of the recommendations of the Pay Equity Task Force and amending another Act in consequence.

[English]

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in relation to Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act.. The committee has studied the bill and decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I would like to thank members of the committee from both sides of the House for their hard work, support and collaboration during the study of this bill.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. This report is the result of a study done by our Subcommittee on International Human Rights and is entitled "Canada's Universal Periodic Review and Beyond—Upholding Canada's International Reputation as a Global Leader in the Field of Human Rights".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive report to this report.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. In accordance with the order of reference of Tuesday, June 8, the committee has considered Bill C-389, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression) and agreed, on Tuesday, November 2, to report it without amendment.

* * *

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-589, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Canada Post Corporation Act (use of resources by members).

He said: Mr. Speaker, with my private member's bill, I propose to amend the Parliament of Canada Act to prohibit the members of the House of Commons from using funds, goods, services or premises made available to them, in other words taxpayer money, to carry out parliamentary functions in support of or in opposition to the appointment of the election of a person to the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board or any other federal body.

The bill would also amend the Canada Post Corporation Act to prohibit those members from transmitting mail free of postage for the same purpose.

• (1540)

[Translation]

As we know, the Conservative members recklessly spent a large amount of taxpayer money on the 2008 board elections. They showered the Prairies with fliers that promoted candidates who opposed the board. Taxpayers should not have to foot the bill again if the Conservatives decide to use the same strategy for the current elections.

[English]

In other words, this bill hopefully would prevent abuses of our democratic process in the future by not allowing any member of Parliament to use his or her funds to either oppose or support the elections of directors for the Canadian Wheat Board or similar organizations.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to present a petition signed by 541 individuals from my riding. The petition concerns EI changes.

The petitioners encourage Parliament to maintain the benefit for 50 weeks in all regions, Bill C-10, eliminate the two-week waiting period and allow the pilot projects 11 and 12 to continue. The government has only agreed to continue these pilot projects for a year. As well, the best 14 weeks has only been agreed upon for eight months. It is so important to rural Canada, fish plant owners and the tourism industry.

This is one of many petitions I hope to present in the coming weeks.

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present a petition signed by 575 people from my riding. This petition supports an initiative by FADOQ, a federation that represents seniors.

This petition calls on the government to implement automatic enrollment for the guaranteed income supplement (GIS), for the spouse's allowance and for the survivor's allowance. The petition also calls for the guaranteed income supplement to be increased by \$110 a month for people living alone and for the monthly survivor's

Routine Proceedings

allowance to be increased to \$199. It also calls on the government to implement full, unconditional retroactivity for people who have not been given the guaranteed income supplement and to extend the guaranteed income supplement and the spouse's allowance by six months upon the death of one of the beneficiaries in the couple.

Those are the wishes and requests of the 575 petitioners who want to improve life for our seniors.

[English]

VETERANS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first is a petition from citizens across many communities and from all walks of life who want Parliament to know that they genuinely support and value the contributions of our veterans and that they regard a veteran as a veteran, regardless in which deployment or where an individual may have served.

The petitioners join the veterans ombudsman and General Walter Natynczyk in condemning the new veterans charter and the Department of Veterans Affairs for creating barriers to serving Canada's veterans. They also demand that existing services, such as veterans' hospitals, be mandated to serve modern-day veterans, including the more than 200,000 members of the armed forces who have served in peacekeeping missions since the Korean war.

The petitioners want there to be a full hearing in the House of Commons in response to the issues of pensions, special care programs, services and the preservation of an independent Department of Veterans Affairs and that Parliament act to ensure veterans and their families receive the supports they have been promised and to which they are entitled as members of the armed forces, past, present and future.

• (1545)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition is on behalf of citizens who support the Native Women's Association of Canada and its Sisters in Spirit campaign, which has identified 520 missing and murdered aboriginal women whose cases go back as far as 1970. The equivalent in the whole Canadian population would be 18,000 missing or murdered women.

The research done by NWAC has convinced Canadians that violence against aboriginal women must be stopped and that we need to find the strategies, resources and tools to stop women from disappearing.

The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to ensure NWAC receives sufficient funding to continue its important work of protecting women through the Sisters in Spirit initiative and to invest in initiatives recommended by NWAC to help prevent more women from disappearing.

Routine Proceedings

RIGHT TO LIFE

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am tabling in the House a petition signed by Canadians from across the country.

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

[*Translation*]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by 250 Air Canada workers who belong to local 1751 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to ensure full compliance with the 1988 Air Canada Public Participation Act, which requires that Air Canada maintain operational centres in Mississauga, Winnipeg and Montreal. More than 23,000 direct and indirect jobs are at stake.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition in support of Bill C-544.

[*English*]

The petitioners want to draw the attention of the House that horses are ordinarily kept and treated as sporting and companion animals, that they are not raised primarily as food producing animals and that they are commonly administered drugs that are strictly prohibited from being used at any time in all other food processing animals destined for the human food supply.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to bring together and adopt into legislation Bill C-544, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act and the Meat Inspection Act, thus prohibiting the importation or exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.

[*Translation*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, as the member for the great riding of Manicouagan, located on the north shore in Quebec, and pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present, on behalf of the north shore Innu community, a petition signed by several hundred residents of the Innu communities in my riding.

Since education is a fundamental right, and since all persons are entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to enact legislation and provide adequate funding to guarantee high-quality, culturally relevant education programs and services for our first nations.

[*English*]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise to present

two petitions on different subjects, from people and groups in Thunder Bay—Superior North.

The first is a petition regarding Bill C-544, relating to the slaughter of horses for meat for human consumption.

As we heard a moment ago, there are a number of people across Canada, including my petitioners, who are concerned. Because of the likelihood of illegal residues, food additives and drugs in these horses, because they are animals primarily incorporated into our society as companions and sport animals, and for many other reasons, the petitioners are highly opposed to the slaughter of horses and support Bill C-544.

These are citizens from Marathon, Manitouwadge, Terrace Bay, and the first nations of Pic River, Heron Bay and Pic Mobert.

• (1550)

HOUSING

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, the second petition that I would like to submit today is in regard to Bill C-304, which has to do with a national housing strategy.

These citizens are extremely concerned that it is long overdue for us to have more not-for-profit housing, housing for the homeless, and access to housing for those with special needs such as seniors, persons with disabilities, et cetera, and especially and additionally, sustainable and environmentally sound design standards for housing.

The petitioners are people from the communities of Thunder Bay, Murillo, Kaministiquia and Armstrong, in the riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North.

[*Translation*]

VETERANS CHARTER

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am presenting a petition from the Royal Canadian Legion, Pointe-Gatineau Branch 58, in my riding of Gatineau.

The 59 petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to amend the veterans charter to restore the lifetime monthly pension for injured soldiers as compensation.

[*English*]

PASSPORT FEES

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my petition calls on the Canadian government to negotiate with the United States government to reduce the United States and Canadian passport fees.

The number of American tourists visiting Canada is at its lowest level since 1972. It has fallen by five million visits in the last seven years, from 16 million in 2002 to only 11 million in 2009. Passport fees for an American family of four can be over \$500 U.S.

While 50% of Canadians have passports, only 25% of Americans do.

Routine Proceedings

At the recent Midwestern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments, attended by myself and over 500 elected representatives from 11 border states and three provinces, a resolution was passed unanimously, which reads:

RESOLVED that [the] Conference calls on President Barack Obama and [the Canadian Prime Minister] to immediately examine a reduced fee for passports to facilitate cross-border tourism; and be it further

RESOLVED, that [the Conference] encourage[s] the governments to examine the idea of a limited-time two-for-one passport renewal or new application;

To be a fair process, passport fees must be reduced on both sides of the border. Therefore, the petitioners call on the government to work with the American government to examine a mutual reduction in passport fees to facilitate tourism, and finally, promote a limited-time two-for-one passport renewal or new application fee on a mutual basis with the United States.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 363 and 370.

[Text]

Question No. 363—**Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With regard to Export Development Canada (EDC) financing or loans provided to Porter Aviation Holdings Inc. for the purchase of 16 aircraft from Bombardier, from 2007 to present: (a) what is the amount of any financing or loans provided; (b) how does that financing fit within the mandate of EDC for Canadian exports, given that only 21 percent of Porter's flights are cross-border; and (c) has the Minister responsible waived the normal EDC requirements for Porter Aviation Holdings Inc. and, if not, what plans exist to enforce the EDC mandate?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Export Development Canada, EDC, reports individual transaction information on all financing, including guarantees, political risk insurance to lenders, and equity transactions with consent of its customers on EDC's website at <https://www.edc.ca/edcsecure/disclosure/DisclosureView.aspx>. Since 2007 to present, EDC has provided three loans for a total of 16 aircraft to Porter Aviation Holdings Inc. for the sale of aircraft in association with Bombardier Inc.—Aerospace and Pratt & Whitney Canada Corp. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, EDC only reports out its support in dollar ranges and not actual loan amounts:

June 2009:	\$50 million—\$100 million
February 2009:	\$100 million—\$250 million
February 2008:	\$50 million—\$100 million

All transactions facilitated by EDC are reviewed to ensure consistency with the corporation's mandate which is to support and develop, directly or indirectly, Canada's export trade and Canada's capacity to engage in that trade, and to respond to international business opportunities. These subject transactions were deemed to support capacity to engage in international business and also in developing export trade.

In response to part (c), the answer is no.

Question No. 370—**Ms. Libby Davies:**

With respect to funding for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation programs such as the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the Affordable Housing Initiative, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs and other affordable housing initiatives: (a) will these initiatives be funded after March 2011; (b) what funding will they receive; (c) when will the organizations funded through these programs be informed whether or not these programs will continue to be funded; and (d) if they are not to be funded after March 2011, how will the government spend the funds previously allocated to these programs?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in September 2008, the Government of Canada committed to more than \$1.9 billion in housing and homelessness over five years, until March 2014. This included a two-year renewal of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's homelessness partnering strategy, HPS, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's affordable housing initiative and suite of housing renovation programs including the residential rehabilitation assistance program until March 31, 2011, as well as a commitment to maintain annual funding for housing and homelessness until March 31, 2014.

The Government of Canada is committed to working with its partners to develop and implement solutions to housing and homelessness issues. In the fall of 2009, the federal government consulted with provincial and territorial governments, communities, aboriginal organizations, as well as a number of public and private stakeholders on how the current approach to housing and homelessness could be improved, and on how best to use federal investments in this area from 2011 to 2014. A meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for housing and homelessness concluded the consultations in December 2009.

At this time, the Government of Canada is taking into consideration all the feedback that was received during the consultation process, in order to follow through on its commitment to fund housing and homelessness initiatives through to March 31, 2014.

* * *

[English]

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. 356, 358, 362, 364, 366, 367, 369, 373, 374 and 387 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 356—**Ms. Libby Davies:**

With regard to funding the government has awarded under Canada's Economic Action Plan since it was first introduced: (a) what is the total amount of funding the government has awarded in the riding of Vancouver Kingsway, detailing in each case the department or agency, the initiative and amount; and (b) what is the total amount of funding the government has awarded within the City of Vancouver, detailing in each case the department or agency, the initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 358—Mr. Fin Donnelly:

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2007-2008 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of New Westminster—Coquitlam, specifying each department or agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 362—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With respect to chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCSVI): (a) do the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) or Health Canada recognize the Consensus Document of the International Union of Phlebology (IUP) on the diagnosis and treatment of venous malformations, in which CCSVI is recognized as venous truncular lesions obstructing the main outflow routes from the central nervous system; (b) does CIHR or Health Canada recognize the recommendations by the IUP expert panel for therapeutic interventions, including angioplasty, stenting, or open surgical repair of the lesions, in proven CCSVI cases; (c) did anyone from CIHR or Health Canada attend the July 26, 2010 CCSVI Professional Symposium and, if not, (i) was there a review of the findings of the Symposium, (ii) was the review included in the process for the August 26, 2010 meeting between CIHR and the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada (MSSC); (d) what were the terms of reference for the August 26, 2010 meeting between CIHR and the MSSC; (e) in detail, what were the steps taken in the review of the current state of CCSVI science for the August 26 meeting and, specifically, (i) were international experts outside of the United States consulted, (ii) what process was undertaken to ensure fair and unbiased reviewers, (iii) what check of reviewers' backgrounds was undertaken regarding links to specific organizations, review panels and grants obtained, (iv) which, if any, of the reviewers had previously spoken for or against the CCSVI theory or liberation procedure, (v) were reviewers who had experience or expertise with CCSVI selected and, if not, why not, (vi) which, if any, of the reviewers declared a conflict of interest, (vii) what, if any, action was taken to address any identified conflict of interest; (f) did the Health Minister review the biographies of the committee members for the August 26 meeting (i) if not, why, (ii) if so, were any problems identified and any action taken; (g) what published papers were reviewed by panel members, broken down by (i) those that confirm venous malformations in Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients, (ii) those that deny venous malformations in MS patients, (iii) those that neither confirm nor deny venous malformations in MS patients; (h) were international practitioners, such as those in Bulgaria, Italy, Kuwait and the United States, consulted to learn (i) how many liberation procedures they had undertaken, (ii) what, if any, improvements their patients experienced, particularly in relation to fatigue, "brain fog", motor skills, and Expanded Disability Status Score; (i) what were the details of the agenda for the August 26, 2010 meeting; (j) what will be the process for establishing the CCSVI working group, announced August 31, 2010, and (i) will it be an open or closed process, (ii) will it include CCSVI and liberation procedure experts from Canada, such as Dr. Sandy MacDonald, and around the world, (iii) who will Chair the group, (iv) how often will it meet, (v) how often will it report and to whom; (k) what are CIHR and Health Canada's responses to the Society of Interventional Radiology's September 2010 position statement, particularly its statement that it "strongly supports the urgent performance of high-quality clinical research to determine the safety and efficacy of interventional MS therapies, and is actively working to promote and expedite the completion of the needed studies"; (l) prior to the CIHR's announcement on August 31, 2010 that pan-Canadian clinical trials on the liberation procedure would not go forward at this time, how many provinces or territories requested that the federal government undertake national clinical trials; (m) since the beginning of 2010, how many Canadians have travelled abroad for the liberation procedure and what, if any, tracking has CIHR or Health Canada undertaken regarding each patient's procedure, progress and related expenses; (n) will Health Canada be undertaking a review of the liberation procedure at each location it is performed worldwide, including an examination of (i) the cost, (ii) the number of procedures performed, (iii) the data collected, (iv) the safety and efficacy of the procedure, (v) the follow-up, (vi) the ranking of the sites for Canadians wishing to pursue this treatment; (o) what consideration has CIHR or Health Canada given to how the August 31 recommendation not to proceed with national clinical trials will impact the number of Canadians travelling outside of Canada for the liberation procedure and what, if any, studies have been undertaken to address the possible impacts; (p) will CIHR or Health Canada undertake any studies relating to any challenges MS patients face on returning to Canada after receiving the liberation procedure abroad, including medical complications, the refusal of treatment by neurologists or practitioners and the refusal of care by long-term health facilities; (q) will the government grant the \$10 million the MSSC has requested for research and, if so, when; (r) how much of the \$16 million the government allocated to CIHR will be available for (i) MS research, (ii) CCSVI

research; (s) will CIHR funds be made available to assist in the creation of a registry that collates data regarding the progress of MS patients who undergo the liberation procedure and, if so, (i) who will be involved in its development, (ii) what is the timeline for development and roll-out; and (t) what research is CIHR or Health Canada undertaking or funding regarding (i) an atlas of anatomical venous variations in the neck and chest, (ii) treatment for venous inflammation, iron storage and hydrocephaly, (iii) possible linkages among CCSVI, MS and other unidentified factors, (iv) treatment and follow-up protocols, (v) design of safe apparatuses and procedures to keep liberated veins open?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 364—Ms. Olivia Chow:

What is the total amount of government capital and operation funding, since fiscal year 2008-2009 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Trinity—Spadina, listing each department, agency, funding transfer to provincial and municipal governments and arm's length agency, such as Waterfront Toronto, detailing in each case the initiative and amount, including the date the funding was allocated?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 366—Ms. Olivia Chow:

With regard to individuals detained due to the lack of residency status in Canada, from 2006 to present: (a) what is the total number of individuals detained, broken down by location, detention center or jail and the demographics of each detainee, including how many are under 18 years of age; (b) what is the maximum duration of detention; (c) what is the average duration of detention; (d) how many detainees are housed on the floor, using sleeping bags and blankets; and (e) what is the operation plan of the Canada Border Services Agency to ensure the facilities meet the standards prescribed in the Auditor General's 2008 report?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 367—Mrs. Carol Hughes:

What is the total amount of government funding, since fiscal year 2008-2009 up to and including the current fiscal year, allocated within the constituency of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, specifying each department or agency, initiative and amount, including the date the funding was allocated?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 369—Ms. Libby Davies:

With respect to a series of round tables hosted by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on the topics of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy and Affordable Housing Initiatives: (a) what reports and recommendations came out of these round tables; (b) what is contained in any report coming out of these round tables or arising from these round table discussions; and (c) are these reports available and, (i) if so, how can a copy be obtained, (ii) if not, when will these reports and recommendations be made public?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 373—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With respect to services offered to veterans in Canada: (a) how many full-time and part-time positions have been cut from Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) between 2006 and 2010; (b) what is the number of uniformed professionals, public servants and contractors by region; (c) what is the overall cost of contract workers; (d) over the next five years, what plans does VAC have to cut back or expand (i) its operational budget, (ii) full-time, part-time or contract positions, (iii) programs or services offered; (e) since 2005, broken down by year, how many (i) Second World War veterans have passed away, (ii) Canadian Forces (CF) members became veterans, and how many of these veterans have families, (iii) new recruits have become CF members and how many of these new CF members have families; (f) how are the numbers in (e) expected to change over the next five years; (g) how many Veterans Affairs' case managers and client service agents currently exist and specifically, (i) where are they located, (ii) what is the average number of clients they serve, (iii) what are the projected numbers of case managers and client service agents needed over the next five years, (iv) what specific preparations are being undertaken to meet these needs; (h) how many times has the "Veterans Charter" been altered, listing for each change (i) the date, (ii) the nature of the change, and (iii) the reason for the change; (i) how many veterans are living from (i) the Second World War, (ii) the Korean War, (iii) Afghanistan, (iv) Canada's peace-keeping missions; (j) for each group listed in (i) how many veterans are (i) disabled, (ii) severely disabled, (iii) receiving the monthly disability payment, (iv) received the lump sum pay-out of up to \$276,089; (k) for those who received the lump sum pay-out, how many veterans received (i) the maximum pay-out, (ii) the average pay-out; (l) how many veterans received a lump sum pay-out between (i) \$0 and \$25,999.99, (ii) \$26,000 and \$50,999.99, (iii) \$51,000 and \$75,999.99, (iv) \$76,000 and \$100,999.99, (v) \$101,000 and \$125,999.99, (vi) \$126,000 and \$150,999.99, (vii) \$151,000 and \$175,999.99, (viii) \$176,000 and \$200,999.99, (ix) \$201,000 and \$225,999.99, (x) \$226,000 and \$250,999.99, (xi) \$251,000 and \$275,000.00; (m) how is financial need measured; (n) how many veterans are currently receiving social assistance, and how do these statistics compare with those under the previous monthly disability program; (o) how often was the monthly payment increased and why; (p) how many veterans have lost their homes in the last five years; (q) what was the average payment for spouses and children prior to 2006, and how do these statistics compare with the new lump sum, specifically (i) how often is the lump sum increased, (ii) is there a portion of the latter payment for spouses and children; (r) what was the average disability pay-out under the system prior to 2006 particularly over a Second World War and Korean War Veteran's lifetime (in today's Canadian dollars), and how do these statistics compare with each category identified in (l) and the maximum lump sum pay-out of \$276,089; (s) what specific actions are being taken to address the 31 per cent of veterans not satisfied with the lump sum payment as identified in the VAC survey released in June 2010; (t) how many veterans are currently appealing decisions regarding their disability pensions, and what is the average time taken to a final decision; (u) how many veterans have appealed a decision regarding their disability pension (i) once, (ii) twice, (iii) thrice, (iv) four times, (v) five times; (v) how many veterans' complaints were reviewed by the Veterans Ombudsman during his tenure, up to and including September 20, 2010, broken down by complaints against (i) Veterans Affairs Canada services, (ii) Veterans Bill of Rights, (iii) the Veterans Review and Appeal Board, (iv) the Bureau of Pension Advocates; (w) in detail, what are all emerging and systemic issues related to programs and services provided or administered by Veterans Affairs Canada brought forward by the Ombudsman during his tenure up to and including September 20, 2010, including, but not limited to, physical and mental health issues, the replacement of pensions with lump-sum payments and disability stipends, and pension claw backs; (x) what are the details of all outreach activities to veterans or organizations that serve veterans across Canada during the national "Leave Nobody Behind" campaign launched by the Veterans Ombudsman, including the issues brought forward by veterans or organizations; and (y) what specific measures were used to evaluate the Veterans Ombudsman's performance in the areas of (i) accountability, (ii) ethics (iii) training, (iv) governance and stakeholder engagement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 374—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With respect to veterans, Canadian Forces (CF) members and their mental health needs: (a) what are the 31 recommendations regarding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) made in 2002 by the Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces, Mr. André Marin, listing for each recommendation (i) whether it is unfulfilled, partly fulfilled, or completed, (ii) any action taken to date; (b) what are the nine highlighted recommendations in the second follow-up report, made in 2008 by the Interim Ombudsman for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces, Ms. Mary McFadyen, listing for each recommendation, (i)

whether it is unfulfilled, partly fulfilled, or completed, (ii) any action taken to date; (c) how many psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, mental health nurses, social workers, chaplains and other counselling personnel currently serve in the Canadian Forces (CF), listing for each group (i) the ratio of practitioners to clients, (ii) the numbers of practitioners by region, including Afghanistan, and any other location where CF are based or deployed; (d) what is the average wait time for PTSD treatment by region, and what is the projected delay for treatment by region once the CF leave Afghanistan in 2011; (e) what follow-up is done for veterans with PTSD; (f) what research will be undertaken to determine (i) whether the risk of dementia can be reduced by effectively treating PTSD, (ii) what role traumatic brain injury might play in PTSD; (g) what data are currently being collected regarding current and former CF members affected by mental illness; (h) how many CF personnel have been treated for Operational Stress Injuries (OSI), anxiety, depression, or PTSD annually since 2001; (i) how many CF personnel have required in-patient treatment for severe PTSD annually since 2001 and what is the average distance to travel for in-patient care by region; (j) of the CF personnel currently serving in Afghanistan, how many are expected to develop OSIs, anxiety, depression or PTSD, and how many per year are expected to require in-patient treatment for severe PTSD; (k) what programs exist for families of military members affected by mental illness by province or territory; (l) what financial, human resource, and program planning is being put in place to address the mental health needs of returning CF personnel, including, but not limited to, in-patient mental health capability, building stronger relationships with mental health institutions, developing less onerous entry criteria to treatment programs, and developing or finding treatment programs which can also address addictions; and (m) what specific actions are being taken to address the mental health needs of soldiers and veterans once the CF leave Afghanistan in 2011?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 387—Mr. David McGuinty:

With regard to veterans: (a) how many veterans currently participate in programs offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and (b) what is the projected number of program participants for each of the next three fiscal years?

(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.

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MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended today by 22 minutes.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***SUSTAINING CANADA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT**

The House resumed from November 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-47, A second 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. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to participate in the debate on the economic statement.

It is fitting that I rise today on “waste Wednesday” when we are debating an economic statement that the government boasts about. The government is either oblivious or ignoring the truth.

We do not have to look much further than today's PBO report or today's unemployment numbers for a dose of reality. This morning's report on business tells us that 300,000 of the 1.5 million Canadians who are unemployed have been so for over 27 weeks and this number has doubled since pre-recession times. Canadians are remaining jobless for longer stretches and those most affected are over 55 years old.

This past summer, for the first time, the Conservative myth of competent manager was exposed for all to see. Misstep after miscalculation, the Prime Minister was exposed as an imprudent fiscal manager, as an emperor with no clothes.

Just a few short weeks ago, Canada suffered a humiliating defeat at the UN, a once proud role in peacekeeping and international reputation sullied by the government's foreign policies; an embarrassing withdrawal of landing rights in the United Arab Emirates at Camp Mirage; the senseless abolishment of the long form census; a wasteful \$9 billion to build prisons based on unreported crimes; and a sole-sourced, untendered \$16 billion contract for F-35 fighter jets and now a Chinook helicopter deal that was neither transparent nor accountable.

Since 2008 when I was elected, we watched the Prime Minister prorogue Parliament not once but twice when he would have otherwise lost a motion of confidence. He reduced the fiscal capacity at a time of economic contraction and recommended a stock purchase when the market bottomed out and the unemployment rate soared. He spent through the \$14 billion surplus that the Liberals left behind for a rainy day, when he should have prepared for the looming and imminent economic downturn.

This list does not even include the lengthy list of broken promises such as income trusts from previous budgets, causing unnecessary and undue hardships for many seniors.

As a result of the 2010 budget, Canadians were left with a \$54 billion deficit and a fire sale on gems such as AECL and Mississauga-based proprietary nuclear technology about to be auctioned off at a barnburner price tag.

Yes, Liberals demanded infrastructure stimulus to jump-start the economy and get Canadians back to work, but we cried foul when we realized that cheques were not in the mail after all. Fifty billion dollars was to be spent on roads, bridges, sewers and much needed

municipal infrastructure spending, but with hard to meet exploding deadlines, communities scrambled to complete projects and saddled themselves with overtime costs and overrun budgets, all for naught. A once in a lifetime opportunity to invest \$50 billion in projects would be spent with no leadership, no vision and no lasting legacy. Worse, it was discovered that ISF money would arrive in Conservative-friendly ridings or those being targeted in a hostile takeover.

The Conservative Party continued to demonstrate both arrogance and incompetence with a string of announcements highlighting its wasteful ways of economic mismanagement, beginning with a fake lake as part of \$1.3 billion price tag for the G8 and G20 conferences, all this when the security costs of the winter Olympics were only \$200 million.

We have since learned that South Korea will be spending 2% of what Canada spent on security, only \$25 million.

We also saw outrageous, lavish and unjustifiable spending in a time of austerity and restraint, on items such as \$200 million on hotel bills, car rentals, bug spray, lunch boxes, cell phones and parking; \$300,000 on bug spray, hand sanitizer and sunscreen; 22,000 bottles of sunscreen, 33,000 bottles of bug spray and 111 bottles of hand sanitizers, all for one day in Deerhurst.

The government also spent \$85,000 on snacks in a swanky downtown Toronto hotel, on 42,000 bags of chips, 71,000 chocolate bars and 57,000 bottles of Coke. That is more waste and mismanagement.

Next up was the \$9 billion price tag to build prisons despite a declining crime rate, on a pretext that unreported crimes were on the rise. If that was not bad enough, the Prime Minister claimed we needed 65 new F-35 fighter jets to protect us from the Russian threat, an excuse to hand out \$16 billion in an untendered contract announced late on a Friday evening in the hopes that Canadians were not paying attention.

● (1555)

Canadians have begun to realize that the cost of the emperor's new clothes is unsustainable and reckless in its disregard for public accountability. After all, one needs to have an ability to count to be accountable.

Government Orders

More recently, the Auditor General confirmed that there was no transparency, no fairness and no accountability by National Defence in managing the \$11 billion Chinook helicopter purchase, which ballooned to twice the original estimated cost. It did not take the procurement to tender, it did not account for full life-cycle costs and it will not sign the maintenance contracts until after the purchase, thus losing all bargaining power. This kind of waste and mismanagement has become a pattern.

Canadians have also been innocent bystanders in the Conservatives' breathless contempt for democracy and democratic institutions. The Prime Minister does not tolerate disobedience or dissent. Canadians have been left panting, gasping and wheezing at the democratic deficit.

The Conservatives silence Canadians who speak the truth, Canadians including: chief superintendent, Marty Cheliak, director general of the Canada firearms program, who disagreed with the government on the long gun registry and was sent away for French lessons; Colonel Pat Stogran, veterans ombudsman, who was told that his contract would not be renewed; Linda Keen, chair of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, who was fired because she stated the truth about the government's mishandling of the isotope crisis at AECL; Peter Tinsley, chair of the Military Police Complaints Commission, who was fired for acknowledging that prisoners were being tortured; Paul Kennedy, chair of the RCMP Police Complaints Commission; Mr. Munir Sheikh, head of Statistics Canada, who tried to put the sense back into the long form census; Steve Sullivan, ombudsman for the victims of crime, who was replaced for questioning the government's claim of unreported crimes; and Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, whose office is chronically challenged and underfunded.

There was also Canadian diplomat, Richard Colvin, who had his good reputation smeared for speaking the truth about tortured prisoners; and Rémy Beaugard, chair of Rights & Democracy, who found himself under siege by Conservative ideological appointments. God rest his soul.

There was also the government's failure to present unredacted Afghan documents despite a parliamentary motion requiring it to do so, or its unwillingness to allow witnesses to appear before certain committees.

I have provided the House with an exhaustive but still incomplete list of individuals and agencies created to uphold democratic conditions and keep our government accountable but which have been shut down or shut out.

Further proof of the democratic deficit and lack of respect for the supremacy of Parliament is evidenced in the government's unfounded and unilateral decision to cancel the long form census. The consensus on the census is that cancelling it was senseless, or cancelling the long gun registry and twice proroguing Parliament. We recently heard that the Prime Minister was willing to go as high as the Queen to obtain his prorogation had the Governor General turned down his request.

What about the economic costs? Results since January 2008 speak louder than words. Canada has lost 200,000 high-paying, full-time jobs which were replaced by part-time and temporary full-time jobs.

Canada's unemployment rate at more than 8% is 2% higher than it was during the last election. That is 370,000 more unemployed Canadians since 2008, except in the PMO of course where staff costs have increased by \$10 million, or 30%.

The Conservative government put Canada into deficit even before the recession. The first three pre-recession budgets increased program spending from \$175 billion to \$206 billion, an 18% increase. Our deficit currently sits at \$54 billion and is estimated to be \$100 billion over the next two years, higher than it has ever been in the history of our country. The Conservative government is the highest spending, largest debt, largest deficit government in our history.

●(1600)

Household debt is also at record levels. Canada's trade deficit for the summer months was at a record low.

The Conservatives imminent \$13 billion unemployment insurance tax hike will cost another 200,000 jobs and hard-working Canadian families hundreds of dollars.

The \$156 billion of new debt that the Conservatives plan to borrow between 2009 and 2014 will cost taxpayers \$10 billion in interest payments each and every year for decades to come.

The government has a disregard for democracy, a distaste for openness, fairness and accountability, a disrespect for fiscal prudence, and a disdain for competent economic management. It is a spiral that cannot continue.

As Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan predicted, the Conservatives reign will be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short".

●(1605)

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the presentation by the member from the other side and I found it quite interesting. She talked about the creation of jobs and how we are facing some challenges.

Maybe she could explain to the House how it is that her party is proposing to roll back the corporate tax cut that comes in on January 1. I happen to come from a business background and know that if a company has to pay more in tax it will not be investing more in jobs and it will not be investing more in the company. Maybe the hon. member could explain to the House exactly how she thinks that reversing that corporate tax cut will create more jobs.

Government Orders

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Madam Speaker, we roll back corporate taxes or any kind of taxes when the country can afford it and when the economy is booming as it was when we put \$13 billion away for a rainy day that the Conservatives spent like drunken sailors during the last election.

The Conservatives have been disingenuous with the House and with Canadians. They told Canadians in 2009 that we would have a surplus and then we entered one of the largest, strongest recessions of our day and they have become the greatest spenders. They have dug us into the largest hole with the biggest deficit and biggest debt of all time.

As we heard in question period today, we have a finance minister who cannot add and a Prime Minister who can only divide.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in question period, the finance minister was pretty exercised about tax and spend, and I see why. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's report shows that over the next five years the finance minister will increase taxes by \$68 billion and he will simultaneously increase spending by \$39 billion. He has already, with the deficit this year, run us up another \$156 billion by the end of 2015-16.

Just who is the tax and spender around here?

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Madam Speaker, clearly the question was rhetorical. It is a government that has led us into a \$100 billion deficit. No, we cannot count on the government because it cannot count.

I would like to emphasize the effects of the government's waste and mismanagement on Canadians and average families. The growing strain to find new work has gone beyond the manufacturing sector and has hit not only factory workers but long-term unemployment has spread out to professionals, to accountants, to executives, to educators and many older workers who have not been able to and will not be able to cope without a job for a long period of time.

Let us look at the effects on families. The increase in long-term unemployment has many implications. The longer individuals are out of work, the more skills they lose and the tougher it is to find a job. Many workers will be forced to find jobs that are beneath them, beneath their skill set or they will need to take a pay cut. Their confidence ebbs. There are health issues, mental health issues, marriages suffer and, in fact, marriages fall apart.

The consequences also affect the broader economy and more people move to social assistance, or depend on family members to live, or live off their savings or sell all their assets just to re-enter the job market. "This is human capital, which is being depreciated," said Stephen Gordon, economics professor at Laval University in Quebec City.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like a quick clarification and then I have a question. Being a recreational sailor who enjoys the odd libation, I want to assure the member that I would never spend money like the current government spends money. I want her to understand that.

I had the pleasure of working with my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville this past summer. We met with a group from the

National Philatelic Centre in Antigonish where we are seeing great full-time jobs being lost at that centre. What we are seeing in the public service is a shell game where some positions will not be renewed. Does the member think we can expect more from the government as we go forward, not backfilling those positions within the public service?

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Madam Speaker, we cannot count on the government for anything and certainly not to create or sustain jobs, that is for sure. It is the Liberal Party that will protect the jobs of today, create the jobs of tomorrow, invest in research and innovation, commit to lifelong learning and protect those who are most vulnerable.

• (1610)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand in the House and speak to the bill before us, Bill C-47, which looks at the budget and the economic policies taken by the government.

Essentially, this is a budget that people back home in the riding that I have the honour of representing, the riding of Churchill, know it is not a budget for them. In fact, it is a budget for very few Canadians out there, often Canadians who already doing quite okay, when we should be looking, especially in a time of recession, at what might benefit everyone and at particular areas, whether it is industries, regions or communities, that have faced particular hardships as a result of this most recent economic recession.

I am proud to stand in the House along with so many of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party to speak out on how this budget has done little to support Canadians. While we are happy to see that some of our measures and work in the area of employment insurance and in some small ways in certain other areas have been heard, the vast majority of proposals and the spirit of looking out for average Canadians and the challenges they face has not been heard in this budget. It certainly is not reflected.

This budget does something that is not only counterproductive to the situation we currently face but also presents a dangerous trend when we look ahead at our future. Budget 2010 presents ample evidence of a tax strategy that begins to take away increasingly from average Canadians and benefits more and more those who are well off and work in sectors that have been very successful.

The government continues to drive the country deeper into debt so it can give tax cuts to profitable corporations: \$21 billion worth since 2008 and \$60 billion worth by the time they are fully implemented in 2014. During that same period, the government, by its own reckoning, will add \$162.4 billion to the public debt, \$60 billion more than the 10 previous years of surplus erased.

While the government is giving corporations a free pass on contributing to the country's financial recovery, it is planning to take a big chunk out of the pockets of Canadian workers. Over the next four years, the Prime Minister plans to rake in over \$19 billion more in EI premiums than is paid out.

Government Orders

While the oil and gas and banking sectors have benefited from tax breaks, the same has not been the case for the average Canadian. In fact, with the increase in EI premiums, that burden has been increased.

There are specific stories in the region that I represent that speak to how this budget has not responded to people's needs. I would like to first begin by looking at how this budget does very little when it comes to the needs voiced by aboriginal Canadians.

I have the honour of representing 33 first nations and many Métis communities in my area. When I visit these communities and hear from aboriginal peoples in northern Manitoba, they speak out for the need for adequate funding for education.

Just this afternoon I was speaking out on a new study that showed record high dropout rates among aboriginal Canadians in my own home province of Manitoba, something that is so disheartening to see in the year 2010 when so many of us know the value of an education. However, the reason we see these rates is because the federal government, both under the Liberal leadership and now under the Conservatives, fails to adequately fund education on reserves and fails to adequately fund post-secondary education across the board for first nations and Métis students. This prevents them from accessing opportunities that we all know are key to them progressing into the future.

We know that \$10 million were put aside for the work around missing and murdered aboriginal women, many of these women coming from the region that I represent. However, instead of the government listening to organizations, like the Native Women's Association of Canada or the Sisters in Spirit organization, it has chosen a very narrow approach. While work to collect statistics and the policing approach is important, we also need to be looking at specific measures in terms of domestic violence and violence perpetrated against aboriginal women, as well as awareness and prevention in that area, something we do not see this pocket of money going toward.

● (1615)

In this budget, there is no new money for water or waste water management in aboriginal communities. This week, I have stood in this House to ask the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the government what they are going to do about the third world living conditions in the first nations that I represent. The Island Lake communities face some of the worst water and sewer conditions in all of Canada. These conditions are shocking to Canadians. Yet, this is the reality for some Canadians today. This budget does nothing to address this dire need in northern Manitoba.

Housing is another area in need of significant action. There is a housing crisis not only in aboriginal communities but in northern communities and communities in general across the country, many of which have fast-growing populations. Yet there is no new money for housing. Aboriginal people, the people of northern Manitoba, northerners in general, all these groups are affected by a shortage of adequate housing.

Another issue with a direct negative impact on the communities that I represent is the way the government has handled foreign ownership.

My hometown, which depends on the mining industry, has seen the buying out of the company that ran the mine. It was formerly Inco; now it is Vale. We look forward to negotiating with this company, which put Canadian workers out of work when they went on strike for benefits, a proper pension plan, and a decent commitment to the people of the region, who allow these companies to produce such profits. Yet, the current government failed to say no to the foreign buyout of Inco, a profitable Canadian company. Moreover, it is continuing that trend, amending the Investment Canada Act in this budget bill so that only significant investments will now be reviewed.

The people who live in the communities I represent need a federal government that will stand up to foreign corporations, that will protect our resources, and that will protect Canadian working people and their communities. This budget would not do any of these things.

Smaller rural and northern communities require assurances that our essential services will be supported. This budget attacks our postal service through the withdrawal of international mailers from the monopoly that Canada Post now holds.

This means a reduction in the revenue that Canada Post depends on to provide service to rural and northern communities, which often do not fit a market model. In The Pas, Kelsey, Thompson, Flin Flon, and in communities across northern Manitoba, we fear that postal service to rural Canada will be the first to be cut back. We are already seeing some reduction in service. Yet, instead of having a government that will step up and recognize the importance of delivering this service to Canadians, no matter where they live, we see a move toward privatization and a lack of support for the crown corporations we rely on.

Finally, the state of infrastructure in the north is alarming. We have heard a great deal about the current government's commitment to infrastructure in its stimulus package.

I can tell members that there is a great deal of concern when it comes to ensuring that these infrastructure projects go out in time. I represent communities that are isolated, that have a very short construction period, and that are concerned about running out of time, despite having tried their best to get these projects rolling as soon as possible.

So, all in all, there are many ways in which this budget would not serve the interests of northern Manitoba. That is why I find it so disappointing.

● (1620)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would care to comment on the budget and the waste of money involved in the government's decision to cancel the long form census, and what these things mean to the future of the country.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, the government has not always based its decisions entirely on facts.

Government Orders

By eliminating the mandatory long form census, the government has reduced our access to the information we need to make better policy decisions. For people like northern Manitobans, the people whom I represent, it is a grave concern. As for aboriginal peoples, they are often silenced, and without the long form census their voices will be even less in evidence in the decisions that are made. This is truly troubling.

The same goes for medical decisions. When it comes to health care services in rural and northern Canada, we need the facts from the long form census. When it comes to child care, recreation, or infrastructure, we need the mandatory long form census.

As the member of Parliament for Churchill, I have never heard any of my constituents say that the mandatory long form census compromises the right to privacy. Many people, however, have told me that the absence of the long form census will serve to silence a part of Canada that is all too often not heard.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Churchill mentioned in her remarks the mining company Vale. When that company was given the authority to take over a couple of mines, it gave many wonderful assurances.

I ask the question because today seems to be decision day for the future of PotashCorp, a tremendous Canadian resource that seems likely to be sold out by the Prime Minister, who is selling our resources out from under us again. Maybe we will be greatly surprised, but I doubt it. There will no doubt be some conditions put on the sale, but in similar cases, I believe the conditions have been broken.

I am wondering if the member could comment on her experience with other multinational corporations, foreign corporations from around the world, taking over, under certain conditions, Canadian mining companies.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, the NDP has been clear in the message we are sending to the Conservative government that we want our resources to stay in our hands. We do not want to repeat what has so negatively affected so many of our communities.

We see nickel, steel, and other elements of our mineral wealth moving out of our country, to the detriment of our working people. We see that foreign companies have undertaken an attack on benefits, pensions, and even communities themselves. This is why we ask our federal government to stand up for our communities and make sure that our resources stay in our hands.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Copyright; the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Aboriginal Affairs.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Malpeque.

• (1625)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-47, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures.

Speaking in my role as agriculture critic, I can tell this House that the budget was one of the biggest disappointments ever for the farm community. There was not a new dime for primary producers in that budget, even though many in the livestock sector were facing the worst crisis that Canada's beef and hog industries have ever seen.

Sadly, the government has become known as a borrow and spend government, with both the debt and the deficit out of control. We heard some of those remarks in the House today with respect to the budget officer.

One of our worries with this Minister of Finance was that he might do to Canada what he did to Ontario. Certainly, this has come to pass. We all know that this minister is more responsible than anybody else for Ontario's fall from a have to a have not province. He cut services, downloaded costs, and drove up the deficit, hampering the ability of the Ontario government to do its job. Now he is doing the same thing to Canada.

What do we have for the farm sector? We have two of the biggest spending budgets in Canadian history, together with the biggest deficit in Canadian history. And what did the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food provide for the farmers in their time of need with all that spending? Zero. Nothing.

The minister claims that he puts farmers first, but the only area where the minister has put farmers first is in the area of debt. Since the government came to power, farm debt has reached \$64 billion. That is up \$9 billion under the Conservative government's watch. Net income on the farm has gone down, especially in the hog and beef sectors.

We worked with the government. We tried to work with the government to get money to the livestock sector when commodity prices were at an all-time low. For beef and hogs, we actually managed to get a program through; the government committed itself at the time. However, we warned the government that it could not expect the moneys associated with the emergency advance payment program to be repaid until the market improved.

Our worry was that the government would not stick to its word. Now we know it did not. In fact, on August 6 of this year, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food made an announcement in which he basically demanded that those moneys be paid back. The announcement, which was made in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, lays out the terms of repayment.

This is how bad it is. Starting on June 1, 2011, just a few short months away, producers who took the \$400,000 advance have to pay that money back in 10 short months. That is \$40,000 a month in an industry that is barely able to get back its cost of production.

That was not the original commitment of the Government of Canada. The government assured us at the time that farmers would not have to pay those moneys back until prices improved. Farmers again were given a line.

Government Orders

•(1630)

Now in my province, in Prince Edward Island, I am told by the cattle industry that effective next June or July, as high as 70% to 80% of those livestock operators could find their loans in default. That is unacceptable. The government has to support the farm community and find a way of doing that. I am asking the minister to support the farm community, to not put farmers in the position of where they are in default.

Last night I spoke with a key Prince Edward Island producer. He said that the livestock industry is hurting, especially so in Atlantic Canada. Atlantic Canada is a deficit area in beef production and prices are discounted by 10¢ a pound as compared to Ontario. Ever since we have had BSE in this country, prices for cattle over 30 months are discounted by 20¢ a pound. Producers cannot survive in that kind of regime. They are not getting their costs.

We offered suggestions of things the government could do that would assist farmers in their time of need. In the livestock sector, it could eliminate the viability test. It could change the reference margins and get moneys out there under the safety net program, but there is not the political will. The government has money for everything else. It has \$16 billion for untendered airplanes, \$9 billion for expanding the jails, over \$1.2 billion for the Prime Minister's photo op, but it has no money for primary producers. That is unacceptable.

It is not just in Prince Edward Island. The minister gets up in the House and quotes a farm leader from somewhere. We do know, strangely, when the minister makes an announcement, his office calls up some of the farm organizations and asks, "Could you praise the minister on this a little bit, please", and then he uses the quotes in the House.

However, when we talk to producers on the ground, we get an entirely different story. Linda Oliver from Mozart, Saskatchewan said that the minister "turns his back on the livestock sector". She said that approximately 125 producers and supporters at a meeting in Weekes, Saskatchewan sent a message that contradicts that of the Minister of Agriculture. She said that cow-calf producers are in a dire situation. She also said:

However, we, at the same time have to make a living at this farm. We have not been very self-sufficient for many years now because of the lack of response to the situation by the [Minister of Agriculture].

It is just unacceptable that in this budget, primary producers, farmers, the suppliers of food in this country, the people who are really responsible for food security in Canada, who bring in dollars to the country because of their exports, are basically left to wither on the vine. While exports increase, farm incomes have gone down.

Last week I was at a farm meeting at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. There was the same strong message from farmers in financial difficulty, especially in the livestock sector. They asked the government for a risk management program. They asked that at least under the agri-flexibility fund the Government of Canada allow that to be used for the farm program that farmers want jointly with the Ontario government. The Government of Canada has again refused.

On Thanksgiving weekend I was in the Interlake region, and the crop damage there is phenomenal. It is in a quarter section of land of

canola. There are well over 100,000 acres of land that have been affected by water damage. Those farmers have said consistently that agristability, the safety net programs do not work. Where is the backbench in the government party? Why are those members not arguing for these moneys and telling the government the concerns of farmers in the Interlake region? Why is the minister not coming forward with a program to assist?

•(1635)

The bottom line is that the Government of Canada has seriously failed the farm community in this country. While the government has the biggest spenders and the biggest deficit, the farming industry has been left with virtually nothing. Those in the farm community are the generators of wealth, but the Government of Canada has failed them.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I compliment the hon. member on raising such an important issue.

Wherever I go throughout rural Canada I hear from a lot of farmers about their frustrations and their challenges and whether they should continue on in the farming industry.

The hon. member mentioned having to take 20% less in many areas. In the hog and livestock management situation, what would the member suggest the government actively do? Does the member have a plan for the necessary changes the government should make to protect those farming industries?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, in terms of the hog and livestock industry, the safety net program, agristability, needs to be changed so that it will work for those commodities that have lost their margins. It is allowable under the trade agreements. I do not understand it. Last year the government could have put out \$900 million to the farm community that way, but it failed to do it.

It is a complicated area, but all the government needs to do is change the viability test and the way the reference margins are calculated. That can be put over three good years, or over a longer period of time, so that it would trigger a payment. That is where the government goes seriously wrong. The government believes that our farmers can do it on their own.

The European Union and the United States stand up for their primary producers. In fact, in the United States, between 1995 and 2009, there was \$245.2 billion paid out to the farm communities. The White House this year recognized there was a problem in some of the commodities and recently announced a new disaster aid program, which would cost an estimated \$1.5 billion annually. The United States stands up for its farm community.

Government Orders

This government is allowing our farmers to go under. The only thing farmers are coming first in with this government is first in debt. Our debt of \$64 billion is roughly four and a half times per farmer what it is in the United States. It is unacceptable.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague from Malpeque about the Wheat Board.

It may surprise the hon. member to know that my grandfather, Jack Harrison, was a member from Saskatchewan from 1949 to 1958, from the area of Meadow Lake and North Battleford. My mother was born in Glenbush, Saskatchewan and grew up in a little place called Medstead.

My grandfather would have spoken in this place and defended the Wheat Board. He had spoken about the Wheat Board many times and I am sure he would have been appalled at what the government has done to the Wheat Board. I wonder if my colleague would like to speak about the situation.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Madam Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board, being a single desk selling agency, maximizes returns back to primary producers on the moneys that are in the international marketplace. Western farmers support that board.

It would take me too long to go through the list of ways in which the Conservatives have tried to undermine the board, but I will mention what the minister said in this House yesterday.

When the Wheat Board had asked for the initial prices to be raised, in other words, an increase in what we call the interim payments, the minister tried to blame the opposition parties for that taking so long to happen and said it was because we would not support his bill last spring.

There was a problem with his bill. One part was good in that it set a timeframe and Treasury Board would have to respond quickly to initial prices. However, the other part of the bill would have undermined the ability of the board to do its work.

In a letter to the minister, I offered that the bill be split and we could deal with the initial payment part in a matter of one day in this House with tremendous co-operation. If the minister would have acted on our request, farmers would have had that money in their pockets right now.

• (1640)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance to raise some of the concerns I have with respect to Bill C-47. It is difficult to follow my hon. colleague because he speaks very well and raises the issue with such compassion and caring, but I will do the best I can.

Let me say at the outset that I do not accept that the government has demonstrated either the will or the skill to manage any economic recovery. While the Conservatives may claim to have a steady hand on the wheel during a raging storm, I suggest that if they looked more closely, they would find that they are standing on the docks as the good ship Canada has left without any predetermined plan.

The only saving fiscal grace that we have seen is the thousands upon thousands of small businesses pressing for success, a banking sector that is stable and secure as a result of the previous Liberal

government, and a labour force that is skilled and dedicated. The government has been too busy developing sound bites and using the treasury for self-promoting commercials.

In the election of 2008, the Prime Minister insisted that Canada would never fall into a recession, that we were all dreaming. He suggested that the warnings of a global meltdown were nothing other than alarmists bent on undermining the Canadian economic success story. He dismissed any public discussion of advance preparedness as fearmongering and said that slashing taxes to Canada's largest corporations would prevent any global economic calamity from touching down domestically. How wrong he was and how right we were.

Today looking back, it is very clear that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance were either hiding something for partisan electoral reasons, or they were totally oblivious to the impending economic difficulties. Either way, their approach has been unacceptable, shortsighted and damaging to all Canadians.

Setting all that aside and ignoring the fact that the government has abandoned any semblance of fiscal prudence or long-term planning in favour of a borrow and spend approach to public policy, we now need to focus on the task at hand.

Bill C-47 does have a very few redeeming qualities. For example, in part 1 it seeks to allow for the sharing of the Canada child tax benefit, the universal child care benefit and the HST tax credit for eligible shared custody parents. It also expands the availability of accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation. While, yes, these are good measures when viewed in a singular fashion, when viewed as part of a larger picture, I fail to understand how these items address the impacts of the global economic slowdown in Canada.

While it is true that Bill C-47 makes some technical amendments to the tax free savings accounts and allows registered retirement savings plan proceeds to be transferred to a registered disability savings plan on a tax deferred basis, it fails to address some of the most serious problems faced by individual Canadians and Canadian business leaders.

For starters, Bill C-47 is silent on the fact that Canadians are being forced to carry greater amounts of personal debt just to survive. It is silent on the looming pension crisis that many of us know about. It does nothing to help stabilize the increasing gap between government revenues and government spending.

The Prime Minister inherited a \$14 billion annual budgetary surplus from the Liberals. Then, in one of his first fiscal decisions, he moved to slash the federal fiscal capacity. We watched as government revenues plummeted, something that eliminated any ability for the government to make strategic investments or to help business, labour or seniors when times get tough.

Government Orders

The government took Canada from the economic envy of the world to what the finance minister now suggests is no worse than everyone else. Imagine crowing about mediocrity. That might be acceptable to that borrow and spend gang of mismanagers, but it is certainly a far cry from what Canadians had come to expect under the previous Liberal administration.

• (1645)

The government has used the word “stimulus” to justify everything it ever wanted to do. I will give the House a few examples.

The government recently billed Canadian taxpayers, all of us, a substantial sum of money for a so-called town hall meeting in Cambridge, Ontario, to release the second economic action plan report card. The cost was \$108,000 just to make an announcement that clearly could have been made here in the House or anywhere here in Ottawa.

Then just three months later the government did it again, to release the third report card in Saint John, New Brunswick, at a cost of \$143,000.

That is more than \$250,000 for stunts to tell Canadians we are in good financial shape when it is untrue, because we are not.

That is over and above the 332% increase in the amount the PMO is currently spending on communication consultants, or spin doctors, beyond its internal communications staff, which is immense to begin with and has also increased by 30% in two years.

Canadians can only be fooled for so long.

Canada's fiscal capacity was damaged long before the Conservative government ever began spending on stimulus.

In the name of stimulus and promoting Canada, the Conservatives have spent billions on faster jets, bigger prisons and caviar summits. But when it comes to pension reform, or putting money into the pockets of our seniors, our small businesses or our vital social programs, the Conservatives cry poverty at that point.

Canadians are catching on to the kind of games being played.

In part 5 of Bill C-47, there is an amendment to the Canada Disability Savings Act to allow a 10-year carry-forward of Canada disability savings grants and Canada disability savings bond entitlements. I have no problem with that and I do not think most of us do.

Bill C-47 proposes to make changes that would require consent of a member's spouse or common law partner before the transfer of the member's pension benefit credit to a retirement savings plan. Again, I am not complaining about that.

My greatest concern with Bill C-47 is what is missing from these pages: fiscal prudence, long-term planning, compassion, a real plan for economic success. These are the things Canadians want, need and expect from their government.

During the Chrétien and Martin years, Canada went from the massive Mulroney debt to a global position of strength and envy. Liberals worked and Canadians worked to eliminate the deficit, to reduce the national debt, to make the largest series of strategic tax

cuts in history and to pump billions into vital programs such as health care.

But in just four short years the government has transformed itself from alleged fiscal conservatives to the largest and most lavish spenders in Canadian history. Our deficit is now larger, if one can imagine that, than it was during the Mulroney years.

I guess we should not be surprised though. After all, when the same finance minister was the minister of finance in Ontario he pulled the same stunt along with premier Mike Harris. He sold provincial assets such as Ontario Hydro in order to pay for his mismanagement, and then he promised that hydro bills would not go up. But they clearly did.

While Paul Martin's legacy as finance minister is one that demonstrated a real ability to manage the finances of a nation, the current finance minister can only crow that Canada is not the worst kid on the block. But I guess we all gauge success differently.

Bill C-47, like budget bills before it, has its strengths but it does nothing to show real leadership. It fails to address real problems and it fails to chart a long-term, sustainable course for Canada's economic success.

I know the minister and the Prime Minister say it cannot be done. They say there was no way to see the storm clouds gathering on the horizon, but I wonder why almost everyone else saw it coming.

In the election of 2008, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville devised a detailed plan to help Canada stay off the rocks, but the Conservatives said that our economic fundamentals were wrong. They dismissed it as not being prudent and proactive.

I say to the emperor and the keeper of the purse that perhaps they should contact Paul Martin or the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville or the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who saw this economic slowdown coming.

Just as we did in 1993, the Liberals stand ready to clean up this mess left by the reckless, short-term habits of the Conservatives.

• (1650)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member has worked long and hard on the pension issue and has had quite a number of town halls and various other meetings with people affected, and there are a couple of ideas that are floating out there with respect to creating a stranded pension agency and a supplemental plan for Canada pension so that Canadians are not stranded. Yet in Bill C-47 I see nothing on either issue.

Government Orders

I would be interested in the hon. member's views with respect to both of those ideas and whether the government would reorganize its priorities so that these kinds of issues of keen concern to senior Canadians would be addressed.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, clearly these are issues that are of extreme importance. I have been asking questions of the minister for more than 650 days about just what the plan is. We have been told for more than 650 days that there is a plan, but nothing is being done currently that is going to have any kind of a vision for the future. Our supplementary Canada pension plan program that we are suggesting and we want to move forward with is a way to offer another vehicle for Canadians to be able to save money for retirement.

Clearly as a result of the bankruptcies we have heard about over this difficult last couple of years, many pensioners are also looking for other vehicles to help them. We were suggesting that a stranded pension agency be created so that when companies are going bankrupt, instead of individuals having to receive those pension moneys in an annuity and losing 30%, 40% or 50% of their savings, that could be folded into a stranded pension agency that the government would oversee.

Quebec already did this some months ago because it recognized the problem. We are still waiting for the government to do something for the Nortel pensioners and for those on long-term disability who are suffering. We have a bill coming up in the Senate that asks for that very issue, to try to get the government to support it so that we can help those on long-term disability.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we just heard that it has taken more than 600 days for the minister to respond. My goodness, for our seniors who have contributed so much to building this great country, in the twilight of their years when we should make sure that they live in comfort, we are condemning and the minister's inaction is condemning them to live those final days, in many cases, in poverty.

How many seniors has the member heard from who are in those last days of their lives unfortunately having to live in poverty while the government continues not acting on this file?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, I have toured the country and talked to many seniors and listened to their frustration about struggling to live on \$11,000 a year. I ask anyone who is watching if they have ever thought how they would live on \$11,000 a year. Some of them live on even less. We know that, in spite of everything that has been done, we still have more than 200,000 seniors who are living below the poverty line. We should ask ourselves, never mind \$11,000, how we would live on \$9,000 or \$8,000 a year. How would we possibly manage to do that? It is very difficult. We hear about seniors struggling and going to food banks. This is Canada. That is not the way things are supposed to be.

There has been very little from the government as far as increases toward pensions are concerned; \$1.42 I believe was the cost of living increase that many seniors across Canada received. There is no sense waiting. It must cost far more than \$1.42 just to implement that increase. We need to seriously look at what else we can do to ensure seniors have a good quality of life.

Today, though, it is going to have start with planning for young people like our pages. We need to put more vehicles to be able to save money and make sure there is a financial literacy program out there so that people understand that when they get to age 65, they cannot expect that their old age security and Canada pension plan will be sufficient. They need to have a retirement savings plan, which is why we are suggesting the supplementary Canada pension plan would be a great vehicle to help with that.

• (1655)

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate on Bill C-47.

I want to begin by congratulating my hon. colleague from York West on the excellent work she does on behalf of seniors. She shows great concern for our seniors who are struggling these days. Imagine being on a fixed income that is tied to interest rates when interest rates are as low as they are these days and what a challenge that is to live on very low incomes. When she spoke of people living on incomes of \$11,000 a year, it is heart-rending to consider what kind of a life that means for a person. Think of widows, for example, living on that income or sometimes less and how they manage to eke out, to survive.

I want to extend my appreciation for her excellent work in this regard and also my appreciation for my colleague from Malpeque, who spoke before, who has always been a powerful voice for the farmers of Canada and who has great passion for agriculture and for the challenges farmers face. Thank goodness they have a voice like his in Parliament.

During the worst recession in decades, at a time when Canadians families have been struggling to care for sick loved ones, to save for the kind of retirements we were talking about a moment ago and to pay for their kids' education, these borrow and spend Conservatives spent the last four and a half years, almost five years now, wasting billions of taxpayers' dollars.

By the year 2015, the Conservatives intend apparently to add \$170 billion to our national debt. Imagine that. When we came into office as the Liberal Party back in 1993, we came in with a Conservative deficit of \$42 billion and we managed through the hard work of Canadians. Government obviously played a role, but Canadians sacrificed and got us into surpluses nationally and gradually paid down the debt, year after year for eight consecutive years of balanced budgets, paying down our national debt, moving our country in the right direction and helping to lower our interest rates.

When we lower interest rates, what happens? People can more easily afford to spend on things because they are not paying as much on their mortgage or on their car loan and they can afford perhaps a little more. They can afford to live a little better and it makes a difference in their lives. It makes it a little easier to go to the grocery store. That is important to people.

Government Orders

When interest rates come down as a result of the kind of work done by the Liberal government in the 1990s with the support of Canadians, it benefits the whole economy. There is more money flowing through the economy and that makes a big difference.

The worry is that, with the kind of spending the government has been engaged in, we are eventually going to see inflation and very high interest rates quite possibly. That is good if one is on a fixed income and receiving interest, but it can get too high obviously, so that it hurts the overall economy and it is bad for all of Canada.

The government has been racking up deficit after deficit over the past few years. Its fiscal mismanagement has meant that Canada was in deficit before the recession began. Imagine. The Conservatives came into office with a surplus of \$13 billion and within a very short time they turned around in the wrong way and put the country into deficit before the recession began. They can talk all they want about how there was a need to respond to the recession. They did not believe there was a need at first. The Prime Minister said it was a good opportunity to buy stocks. He said things were a bit bad but everything would be fine.

Things got a lot worse. He was wrong. Things got a heck of a lot worse. In fact it was a lousy time to buy stocks as it turns out. It might have been better later if anyone had the money to do it, but most folks did not. Perhaps some of his prosperous, wealthy friends did, but most Canadians did not have the funds to buy stocks at that time.

Here we had a situation where the Conservatives put us in deficit before the recession hit, through their own mismanagement, with some of the biggest increases in spending in history. In the first year they increased spending by 18%. That is incredible.

This year they have done something else, something really spectacular in the annals of deficit creation, I suppose. They have recorded the biggest deficit in our history, \$55.6 billion.

There is no question that the Conservative government is the biggest spending, biggest borrowing government in Canada's history. I hope they are not too proud of that record, because it is certainly not a record to be proud of.

● (1700)

It is remarkable to think that the Minister of Finance, also known as the minister of debt and deficit did the same thing in Ontario. I guess we should have known it would happen again when the Prime Minister made him finance minister in Ottawa.

Somebody has to tell the Minister of Finance that before he can do things like increase spending and lower taxes, first he has to balance the books. First he has to get rid of the deficit and then he can do those things, as the Liberal government did in the 1990s, but it is a lesson the finance minister sadly has not learned.

It is really a highlight of his mismanagement and of the government's mismanagement. They fail to understand that they do not start increasing spending dramatically and cutting taxes dramatically, as they want to do with corporate tax rates with the big corporations, until they have balanced the books. If they can balance the books, get things under control and get surpluses, then they have the room to do things like that, but not until then. Why they cannot

understand that is startling. Their bad choices will mean that future generations are saddled with more and more debt. Those same choices are not helping hard-pressed Canadians today.

This right-wing Republican-style government, and I do not know if we say a tea party-style government these days because it is pretty right wing, is turning its back on people who are struggling to make ends meet in these tough economic times. Some of my colleagues have talked about this already. It is pouring billions of dollars into U.S.-style prisons and doing nothing about prevention of crime. It is pouring billions into untended fighter jets and tax breaks for wealthy corporations.

It is interesting that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence say that there was a competition for these fighter jets. Yes, there was, in the U.S. 10 or 11 years ago. When was there ever a competition in Canada? Canada was not part of that competition. Since when do we outsource our decisions about making a \$16 billion purchase? That is hard to imagine.

Even today in question period, the Prime Minister talked about how there was a contract for the F-35s. The fact, as members of the House know and as the Prime Minister ought to know, is there is no contract yet. The government has signalled its intention, but it certainly has not signed a contract yet. For the Prime Minister of Canada to say in the House that there is a contract when there is not is truly outrageous. If that is not misleading the House and Canadians, I do not know what is. It is very disturbing.

When we look at the government's treatment and we look at how it spends wastefully, is it any wonder that poverty is on the rise under this regime? Instead of punishing homeowners in March by killing the home renovation program, it should have taken the knife to some of its own pet projects. It could have started by cutting costs, for example, at the G8 and G20 summits, the 72-hour, \$1.3 billion photo op to satisfy the Prime Minister's vanity.

Imagine what the money was spent on. The government wasted millions of dollars on fake lakes, glow sticks, gazebos and steamboats. It had a department responsible for summit infrastructure supporting the building of a gazebo that was kilometres and kilometres from any summit activity.

It had also supported the development of a steamboat that was not even ready to go in the water until three months after. What that could possibly have had to do with the summit is hard to imagine, except that it helped out perhaps the electoral prospects of the Minister of Industry in whose riding it was held.

● (1705)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks made by my colleague because he certainly has laid out many of the areas of wasteful spending by the government.

Government Orders

The amount of money that is spent on consultants and the increase in the cost of the PMO was mentioned earlier. However, something that really goes unnoticed, and I would like the member to comment on this, is the size of the cabinet. Most Canadians could not name 10 cabinet ministers because everything is run out of the PMO, the man who says, "I make the rules". They are all full-fledged cabinet ministers, with their drivers and their full staffs. I do not know what some of them do, but it is certainly a cost to Canadians.

Could the member comment on that? Also, how could that \$6 billion tax cut to corporations, when we are already below the United States, be spent better with wise decisions?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, those are good questions. Let me start with the question about the \$6 billion tax cut that the government is planning for corporations. Let us remember that the tax rate for corporations in our country has come down from 29% to 18%. When the Liberal Party was in government in 1993, it was 29% and we brought it down to about 20%, as I recall. Since then, it has come down to 18%. Now the government proposes to bring it down another 3%.

I am sure it is attractive to businesses, especially big corporations, to hear about their tax rate being lowered, but it would make a lot more sense if it were done in a time when we had surpluses.

The other thing is there are people who are in need. Think of the families these days that are supporting a loved one who is sick or who is elderly and requires a great deal of care. Our family care plan is something that would respond to that and it would be a much better way to spend that kind of money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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 (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the end of government orders.

[*Translation*]

COPYRIGHT MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from November 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-32, An Act to amend the Copyright Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-32, An Act to amend the Copyright Act.

I want to begin by saying that, as everyone knows, we have been waiting for this bill for a long time. We need this bill, we want it and we have been waiting for it. The government was elected two years ago, and we are just now beginning to debate this bill at second reading.

Nevertheless, as they say, "better late than never". Now is our chance to debate it, and we must do so. Over the past few years, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party have tried to introduce bills. Once again, this one comes from the Conservative government. It was a long time coming, but it is here now, and we will debate it.

We need this debate because we have to modernize the Copyright Act. I am sure everyone will agree that is necessary. This legislation must be modernized and adapted to the reality of the century we live in, the 21st century.

We need legislation that takes into account the technological changes that have already happened and will continue to happen at a dizzying pace. We need only consider everything that has happened over the past 10 years and all of the new products that have come to market. For example, consider the role of the iPod, the iPad and all of the other new devices that did not exist 10 or 15 years ago. Today, everyone uses these devices to listen to music and watch movies. We have to take into account the extraordinary technological changes in terms of platforms, production and dissemination.

That is why we need legislation that reflects these changes. We also need legislation that protects the rights of creators and artists. That has become even more important in the digital age now that everything happens so quickly.

It is just as clear that we need legislation that sends an unmistakable message to the international community, legislation that shows Canada takes copyright seriously and promotes and protects those rights. That is the most important part of this.

Unfortunately, we are dragging our feet. We are lagging behind. In some ways, we are looked down on by the international community. All too often, we are being singled out as a bad example. That needs to change.

The law needs to be modernized for all of the reasons I listed, but also to allow us to ratify certain international treaties that are of significant importance to us and our allies.

Government Orders

In preparation for the debates surrounding the passing of this bill, I decided to travel across Canada to meet and talk with those directly or indirectly affected by this important issue. Other members did the same. I am thinking about my colleagues from the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology as well as my colleague and our industry critic, the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, who has done incredible work on this issue.

As I was saying, I travelled from one end of Canada to the other in order to meet with the people concerned by this significant bill. I met people in Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg, Toronto, Regina, all over, in fact. I could list them all, but it would take too long because there are more than 100 groups.

● (1710)

I will simply say that I met with people from the film, television, production and music industries. These are artists, musicians, Internet service providers and others. Over the past several months, I have had extremely productive and worthwhile discussions with people from all of the provinces, except Alberta, where I will be next week to discuss this very important bill.

We need to talk in a fair and balanced manner about this copyright modernization bill. We have to find a delicate balance between the important needs of creators and the needs of consumers, which is not easy. Unfortunately, numerous critics are already speaking out against this bill. They come from everywhere—Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia.

Creators and copyright owners are afraid that this bill will undermine their current rights. That is one fundamental aspect that we need to examine closely. While the bill is a step in the right direction in some cases, is there not a chance that it will undermine or eliminate some existing, protected rights in other cases?

That is an absolutely fundamental issue that must be addressed, and we will take the time to do so. And just because the government took so long to introduce this bill, that does not mean we will examine it hastily and without taking a step back. That would be irresponsible on our part. On the contrary, we will take the time to consult all the stakeholders involved in order to come up with a bill that is fair and balanced and that really protects copyright owners. Thus, we will meet with several people with whom members of the Liberal caucus have already met, and others with whom we have not yet had the opportunity to meet. This could all be done in committee.

Copyright is a vast, complex and rapidly changing subject. On this side of the House, we understand that it has a real impact on artists, writers, poets, filmmakers and musicians, as well as on video game makers, photographers, merchants, producers, Internet service providers and of course consumers. Copyright has an impact on many people and industries, and we must take that into account. We also need to make sure we have long-term legislation that will not need to be replaced tomorrow, since it is so hard to reach a consensus. Furthermore, the proposed legislation must be as neutral as possible in terms of technology.

Clearly, finding common ground when so many different parties are involved will demand some compromises, but they must be fair

and balanced. In order to achieve this, we need to have frank, open discussions from beginning to end.

● (1715)

At this time, I would like to mention some of the issues that were raised during my cross-country visits and some points that were raised during meetings here in Ottawa with stakeholders from the cultural community and from industry.

I want to raise some of the important concerns and questions that we should be debating, especially with regard to digital locks. For example, should these famous digital locks prevail over all other rights to make copies? That is the question because Bill C-32 includes new rights that authorize Canadians to make copies for personal reasons, including format shifting, time shifting and back-ups. Nonetheless, the new provisions in the bill having to do with digital locks take precedence over these rights. In other words, to be clear, under the new legislation, someone who buys a CD on which a company has installed a digital lock cannot get around this lock in order to transfer the content of the CD to another format without breaking the law.

I know that is a bit technical, but it is a fundamental aspect of the bill and we must debate it. It is also extremely contentious and was highly contested when the Conservatives introduced their other bill, Bill C-61. We have already heard many protests and discussions on this aspect of the bill. It is clear that this point needs to undergo further review, and we believe that amendments will need to be made in committee.

The second point has to do with education. Bill C-32 contains new exemptions that allow teachers and teaching institutions to make copies of works for educational purposes without copyright infringement. This blanket exemption from fair dealing rules is facing growing opposition from the various cultural communities.

Given the comprehensive nature of fair dealing, writers and publishers, for example, believe that this new exemption will permit teachers and educational institutions to make copies of their works at will and then give them to their students. Will that happen? Is that really what will happen? We will have to see and study the bill, but I can say that many people believe that teachers and educational institutions should be required to pay royalties to creators for the use of their works. I find this to be a fair and consistent position.

Let us go a little farther. How should this exemption be applied? Should a teacher be able to claim that a copy of an unedited version of a movie was made and shown to a class for educational purposes and not pay a royalty? We have to ask the question. Is that the case?

We realize that it is important to modernize the act so that teachers can apply it in the digital age. But we also believe that authors and creators are entitled to be compensated for the use of their works and for what they have created. That is clear. We will want to discuss this in committee as well.

Government Orders

Similarly, we will have to clearly define what constitutes “fair” dealing, as it is used in the bill. I ask the question and we will ask it in committee. What are the limits and the parameters that apply to the term “fair”? We must answer this question.

● (1720)

The third point has to do with mashups, or user-generated content. Clause 22 of the bill provides for an exception for mashups and user-generated content.

What is a mashup? A mashup is, for example, a personal video produced by combining excerpts from films and sound recordings and then posted on YouTube or a similar site. That happens.

In our opinion, the wording of this clause is far too broad. With this rule, someone could post the full version of a movie on YouTube. All they would have to do is add an excerpt at the beginning or the end and call the video a mashup. That seems a bit too broad. We want to define this and debate it. This point will also have to be carefully examined in committee.

The fourth point has to do with the statutory damages in the bill. Clause 38.1 of the bill provides for damages of between \$100 and \$5,000 for all copyright infringements for non-commercial purposes. Members will understand that we have some concerns here. It seems logical to us that damages related to copyright infringement should be in proportion to the seriousness of the infringement. That is also something that will have to be analyzed and studied in committee.

The bill also leaves a few things out, such as the public display of art, for example. Currently, if an artist displays a piece of art in a public space for reasons other than to sell it, they receive compensation. However, if the work was created before 1988, the artist does not receive compensation; they do not receive a penny. We need to use this opportunity to fix this situation, which we find to be discriminatory.

Another thing that has been forgotten is the resale of artwork, or resale right. Across Europe, artists are compensated when their works are sold and resold. Everyone knows that original art increases in value over time. Artists become more and more well known and the value of their works increases. Artists feel, and rightly so, that part of this increase in worth should come to them upon resale. It already exists in Europe.

When this is studied in committee, we would like to look at what has happened in Europe to see how Canadian artists could be more fairly and equitably compensated for their work. We believe that our artists' efforts are no less valuable than those of their European counterparts.

There are many other points that I would like to raise, but I do not have the time. However, I will definitely raise them in committee. We just need to remember that this bill has some good points but also some flaws and, in certain cases, leaves things out altogether. We will work hard to improve it.

● (1725)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member seems to be very knowledgeable about the subject matter of the bill.

The government has made the claim that it must follow the American approach to the WIPO Internet treaties and must support the digital lock measures in the bill. However, 88 countries have now ratified the WIPO treaties and only half of those 88 countries support the American approach.

Does the member believe that perhaps the current government is being overly influenced by the American movie industry, business lobbyists or perhaps even American politicians to get their version of what should be a proper agreement in force in Canada with the view to having a sort of common competitive market in North America?

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. First of all, I would say that generally speaking, the government is always a little too easily influenced by what happens in the United States, especially during the previous administration, the Bush administration.

The issue of digital locks is interesting, because there are various options and various ways to respect our treaties. We think it is acceptable, however, but not in an absolute way. There must be some kind of reasoning behind it, a certain limit. For instance, when people buy a certain product, there must be a way for them to make a copy for their personal use without violating the copyright.

● (1730)

[English]

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it appears that there is a conflict in terms of intellectual property that would be applicable to educators, the teaching profession and those involved in long distance learning, and so on. On the other hand, the copyright law is trying to establish a broader umbrella to protect those who are the initiators of creative musical and artistic property. Does the member think the committee can come to a resolution?

I must say that I lean on the side of those from the educating field who are saying that in terms of intellectual property and the ability to use in the classroom that which has been created to the benefit of students is an extremely important objective and concern that has been raised. Would the member please address the question of whether the committee in fact can deal with the elements of that issue?

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his important question.

The bill adds another exemption for the education sector. I understand the member's reasoning and I know how much he cares about the education sector, and so do I. However, just as a teacher would not agree to work for free, an author should not have to work for free, or in other words, supply his or her work without getting paid.

That is, in fact, the point of this bill. We need to strike a balance between, on the one hand, the rights of creators, authors and publishers and, on the other hand, the rights of consumers. In this case, we could also add the rights of students and teachers.

Government Orders

We do not believe that this bill is balanced. The government tells us it is balanced, but I do not believe that is the case, because certain points from the consultations were not included. We can do much better, and that is exactly what we hope to do in committee. We want to come up with a bill that is fair to both creators and consumers.

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats support collective licensing and fair access to education materials. We have three fantastic post-secondary institutions in my great riding of Sudbury. We have Cambrian College, Collège Boréal and Laurentian University, which, I might add, has a new chancellor, Aline Chrétien who I congratulate on being the new chancellor. One of the things that all three post-secondary institutions have is fantastic distant education programs.

What is concerning about this bill is that we are hearing that under the bill digital lessons for long distance learning must be destroyed within 30 days of a course. We feel that this would treat students in digital learning environments as second-class citizens and would undermine the potential of new learning opportunities. If we look at the vastness of northern Ontario, we need to ensure that all students who participate in digital learning have that opportunity.

I would like to hear the hon. member's comments on what he thinks about that piece of this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

This, too, is an important issue because it deals with education, particularly the education exemption. It is extremely important precisely because we have to bear in mind the challenges faced in the regions and the ability to provide distance education. It is an extremely important aspect.

I want to reiterate the importance of striking a balance. We have to be able to make it easier for students to take these courses and for professors to teach them. But in so doing, must we accept that authors and creators will not be compensated?

My colleague refers to the fact that course materials must be destroyed. They must be destroyed because no royalty is paid on them because of an exemption. In fact, because the materials are exempt, they do not infringe on the copyright; however, because no royalty is paid, they must be destroyed. That creates a challenge: the materials have to be recreated. It is one of the rather odd and strange aspects of this bill. The options are as follows: either royalties are paid or professors are not required to destroy the materials. We must strike a balance that currently eludes us.

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I can see this bill being popular with photographers because it includes giving them the same rights as other creators. That is certainly a first.

The carve out for network locks on cell phones is bound to be popular with people. Canadians will have the right to unlock their phones if they want to switch carriers as long as they abide by their provider's contract terms.

However, I think what people will not like is what was followed up in the last question by the member for Sudbury, which is that teachers and students will need to destroy digital lessons 30 days after their courses conclude. That is absolutely ridiculous and I think there will be a lot of push back by citizens of Canada on that very point.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my colleague, who raised the issue of education with good reason. That is one of the fundamental elements of Bill C-32. I would say that there is no definite answer because we do not yet know the bill's scope with respect to education. What does "fair" mean? As I said in my speech, we need to figure out what the word "fair" means, what its parameters are and what it covers. What is included in the exemption for education and what is not?

We have to find a balance. We want it to be easy for students to access and easy for teachers to prepare, but we also want our creators to get paid. As I said earlier, would teachers—both of my parents were teachers—agree to work without being paid? No, because teachers have to earn a living. So do authors and publishers. Once again, we have to find a balance here, a balance that the bill does not provide. We hope to find that balance in committee.

[*English*]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-32, An Act to amend the Copyright Act.

I, for one, am a strong advocate of reforming Canada's copyright regulations in order to modernize them and ultimately align them with the realities of the 21st century. Yet, despite my belief that Canada is in dire need of a modernized, intellectual property rights regime, the bill fails to realistically address what is needed.

The government has stated that its aim in updating the Copyright Act is not to punish individual users but rather to focus its deterrence and enforcement efforts on distributors and large websites that illegally host copyrighted content.

The first thing we need to know about creating balanced copyright is that we need to engage all the players. Bill C-61, the government's initial attempt at reforming copyright law in Canada was legislation that was so badly constructed it had to be dropped as soon as it was announced. The Conservatives were forced back to the drawing board, so here we are, after another two years of waiting. Unfortunately, they still have not got the message. The lack of thorough consultation has left major questions about the impacts of the bill.

Government Orders

Specifically, whether the bill will achieve the intended objectives is a subject of debate among the various stakeholders affected by copyright reform, including authors, artists, musicians, record labels, book publishers, collective societies, libraries, museums, school associations, software developers, retailers and consumers.

The lack of thorough consultation with independent stakeholders, such as those mentioned above, is troubling, considering the same problem plagued the bill's predecessor. It all seems to me that there needs to be a consensus-building process which takes into account the concerns of all stakeholders in order to wholly legitimize the regulatory framework being proposed.

On a different note, it is my opinion that the scope of the bill strongly misses the mark through its heightened focus on individual consumers as opposed to going after the more heinous commercial pirates who profit monetarily off the intellectual property of others.

There are two key problems with the Conservative approach to copyright. The first problem is that the rights that are offered in terms of the fair dealing, mashup and parity exemptions can be overridden by the heavy, legal protections being put in place by digital locks.

Under Bill C-32, it is illegal to break a digital lock, even if that lock prevents us from accessing material that we would otherwise be legally entitled to access. In fact, it treats breaking of digital locks for personal use the same as if the lock were being broken for commercial counterfeit.

We oppose the criminalization of consumers, which this aspect of Bill C-32 represents. The government needs to re-evaluate its stance on copyright reform in order to properly address the current realities of the 21st century. Criminalizing hundreds of thousands of individual consumers for simply digitizing their music for personal consumption fails in this regard. We need to focus on commercial piracy, not individual consumption.

I happen to have a seven-year-old daughter who is a huge Hannah Montana and Jonas Brothers fan. We must buy as many Jonas Brothers and Hannah Montana movies and music as we possibly can in my household. I can rhyme off Hannah Montana songs. I am sure many other MPs who have young children could do the same thing. I will not sing one for the House. I do not want to embarrass myself that badly because I am not a great singer. My daughter has a CD collection but we cannot find CD players, so we need to put those on to our MP3 player. Under the bill, my seven-year-old daughter is now breaking the law.

We need to ensure that we are not criminalizing the consumers. The approach the Conservative government is taking goes far beyond the norms adopted by many of the World Intellectual Property Organization countries, or WIPO. In terms of copyright reform, we have been consistent. We support the fundamental principle of remunerating creators for their content. We have consistently called on the government to bring the WIPO treaty into the House to be ratified. If the government had taken this advice, it would have alleviated a great deal of international pressure and given us the space to create a truly made in Canada approach to digital copyright issues.

● (1740)

The Conservatives had five years to address issues in WIPO, and stalled on the WIPO ratification. Instead, their first run at copyright was constructed entirely behind closed doors and read like a wish list for the U.S. corporate lobby.

The second serious problem with the bill is that a number of previous revenue streams for artist organizations appear to be undermined through exemptions and changes. The most notable of these is the government's decision not to extend the private copying levy on CDs to music-playing devices. This fails to address the reality that more and more consumers are choosing to purchase intellectual property through non-traditional means such as digital music files. The levy worked on cassettes. It worked on writable CDs. However, if it is not updated for MP3 players, the levy will die.

The New Democrats put forward Bill C-499 to update the levy on devices marketed specifically as music players and recorders. The Conservatives have misrepresented this levy. They have used it as a straw man for their mailings attacks in our ridings. They have made up figures for the cost of the levy and have denounced copyright licensing as a killer tax.

Let us see what the national media have to say about this attack on the remuneration of artists. The *Edmonton Journal* said that the NDP offered a perfectly reasonable compromise, but that the industry minister misrepresented its contents on a bill that is thoughtful and upholds the basic Canadian values of straight dealing.

The *National Post* was even blunter, saying:

...the government's nonsensical, "Boo! Hiss! No new taxes!" response ... is just dumb...

This is the *National Post* we are talking about, definitely not a progressive bastion that routinely calls for more expansive powers in taxation and regulation. Even this newspaper has shown a willingness to confront the real issues. Why has the government not come to its senses on this matter?

The widespread use of iPods, iPads, and MP3 players, as well as the emergence of products like Kindle, serves as an excellent example of the changing nature of consumption in a technology-driven environment. We must address this gap to ensure that Canada's intellectual property regime is appropriate for the ever-changing technological landscape.

Government Orders

The most obvious criticism that can be made of Bill C-32 is that it fails to address the realities presented to us by 21st-century technology. The fact is that no amount of legislation or legal action will force consumers to return to the business models of the 1990s. The emergence of the digital economy has changed the dynamics of intellectual property. The digital economy is not going away. We need to recognize this. We are attempting to rectify 21st-century problems with 20th-century solutions. Let us be clear. An intellectual property regime designed for the dynamics of the 1990s is not the best means for dealing with the issues of commercial piracy, which is really where our energies need to be focused.

Over the past 20-odd years, technological innovation has led to massive and abrupt changes in the way Canadians live their daily lives. Whether it is the way we get the news, or the way we do our banking, or pay our bills, technology has dramatically altered our consumption habits. Instituting a regulatory regime that fails to observe the significance of the transition to an information technology and e-commerce paradigm will only lead to further failure in distinguishing between commercial piracy and legitimate consumer uses.

Nowhere is this folly more clear than in the United States, with its digital millennium copyright act. The U.S. entertainment industry has used legislation in courts to lock down content and criminalize consumers. The result has been a scorched earth policy waged by the recording industry of America against its own consumers. After more than 35,000 lawsuits against kids, single moms, and even dead people, the digital genie has not been put back in the bottle. The market has simply moved on.

Does this mean that digital technology has trumped the traditional right of creators to be compensated? Certainly not. New markets and new models are emerging. The difficulty is to find the best way to update copyright to meet these challenges. We have a unique opportunity to develop legislation that looks forward rather than back. That is why it was unfortunate to hear the Minister of Canadian Heritage denounce citizens' legitimate questions about the bill as digital extremism.

• (1745)

If copyright reform is to succeed, the government must move beyond the rhetoric of a self-defeating culture war. The choice is really about whether we support regressive or progressive copyright. Regressive copyright tries to limit, control, or punish users of creative works. Regressive copyright is self-defeating, because the public will ultimately find ways to access these works.

Progressive copyright, on the other hand, is based on two clear principles: remuneration and access. The digital age has shown us that consumers of artistic works want to be able to access these works. The Internet is not a threat; it is an amazing distribution format. As legislators, artists, and technological innovators, we need to find the monetizing streams in this new distributing culture.

This balanced approach represents the mainstream of Canadian copyright opinion. I refer the House to the judgment in the case of *Théberge v. Galerie d'Art du Petit Champlain inc.* The Supreme Court stated that copyright's purpose was to strike a balance between promoting the public interest in the encouragement and dissemina-

tion of works of art and intellect, and obtaining a just reward for the creator.

There is a public interest in the access and dissemination of works and a public interest in obtaining a just reward for the creator.

The New Democratic Party's position on copyright is based on the principles of compensation and access. Artists need to be paid for their work, and consumers should be able to access these works with a minimum of restrictions.

The New Democrat position is that we support collective licensing and fair access to educational materials. For example, under the bill, digital lessons for long-distance learning must be destroyed within 30 days of the completion of a course. This would treat students in digital learning environments as second-class citizens and would undermine new learning opportunities.

Specifically, under Bill C-32, students who take long-distance courses would be forced to destroy their class notes after 30 days, and teachers would be forced to destroy their on-line class plans after every semester. This is the digital equivalent of telling universities to burn their textbooks at the end of every session.

What kind of government would force students engaged in digital learning to burn their class notes? No writer gets compensated and no student benefits. This provision shows just how badly out of whack the government is when it comes to understanding the importance of digital education.

In my great riding of Sudbury, we have three fantastic post-secondary institutions: Laurentian University, Cambrian College, and Collège Boréal. All three of these post-secondary institutions offer distance education and distance learning. We want to ensure that this continues, because it is a great way for students in the vastness of northern Ontario to get the education they need.

All this is particularly troubling for me as an MP from northern Ontario. Our country contains many remote areas, and we should be encouraging distance and online education, since course offerings of this type are often the only way for Canada's rural residents to gain access to quality higher education.

We should not be discouraging these types of educational regimes with unduly burdensome regulations prescribing how long a digital lesson can be held.

It is therefore my hope that all parties will be able to reconcile their differences so that we can provide Canadian artists, performers, writers, and the cultural community as a whole with the intellectual property rights protection they deserve, while ensuring that the new regulatory regime respects the changing nature of individual consumption in the 21st century.

• (1750)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Sudbury will have five minutes remaining when the House returns to this matter.

Private Members' Business

It being 5:52 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]

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP) moved that Bill C-530, An Act to amend the Northwest Territories Act (borrowing limits), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to stand here today. It is the first time I have had the opportunity to put forward a private member's bill for debate. It is certainly something that I am sure every MP looks forward to in his career here in Parliament.

Members of this House have heard me say many times how the people of the Northwest Territories want to be masters in their own land. I think this is something people in every province aspire to.

I have spoken about how the NWT is a mature jurisdiction and should not be controlled by Ottawa. Members have also heard me mention that the people of the Northwest Territories know that their requirement for infrastructure is one of the keys to building a better north, a more prosperous north, a north that can better share its wealth with the rest of Canada.

Bill C-530 is a small step towards achieving these aspirations. As many members already know, the Northwest Territories is a creation of this House, much like Canada was a creation of the British House of Commons.

Currently, under the Northwest Territories Act, before the NWT can borrow any money it must first ask permission of the federal cabinet. By practice, the cabinet has set a limit on the amount the NWT may borrow. Currently the limit is \$500 million. This is a recent increase from the previous limit of \$300 million, an increase that took years of lobbying, persuading, and hard work to achieve.

Unfortunately, when the lobbying started all those years ago, \$500 million was sufficient. Today it barely meets the needs of the NWT and will not be adequate for the future.

However, even though it was nowhere near sufficient, because the funds were so badly needed when the limit was increased in 2007, the territorial government said in a press release:

This is a significant step in providing the GNWT with flexibility to make strategic investments in infrastructure to improve the lives of Northerners.

It was not enough. What my bill does is provide the Northwest Territories with a line of credit they can use to finance the building of vital infrastructure, ensuring that our territory progresses in a good fashion.

My bill provides a formula for borrowing based on gross revenues applied every year. The figure we have set is 70% of gross revenues. If my bill passes, the Government of the Northwest Territories will be able to borrow up to 70% of its gross revenues for that year, in totality. The debt is in totality, of course. That would be the total debt

that it is allowed to hold: 70% of the gross revenues of any particular year.

What is the government going to do with this borrowing power? Canada has many aspirations for the Northwest Territories and its development. We have heard the Minister of the Environment speak eloquently many times about the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

Part of what we need to do to develop the Mackenzie Valley pipeline is develop a Mackenzie highway. This will cut the cost of the pipeline, and it will be an essential component of our vision of the Northwest Territories. Connecting all the communities of the Mackenzie Valley with an all-weather road would reduce living costs for residents, open up the rest of the Mackenzie Valley, and provide the opportunity for planned and careful development of our resources.

This is essential to us, but it is expensive. The Taltson hydro project is another example. We are moving ahead quickly to provide hydroelectric power to the diamond mines, which provide large amounts of revenue to the federal government as well as jobs and business opportunities in the Northwest Territories. However, the costs are very high because they use diesel fuel for all their power needs.

We propose that the Taltson hydro project go through an environmental assessment, but its cost is in excess of \$500 million. Without better fiscal capacity within the Government of the Northwest Territories, it is going to be difficult for the people of the Northwest Territories to own this resource.

• (1755)

So once again we see the need for the Government of the Northwest Territories to have flexibility in fiscal capacity in order to accomplish projects that actually are self-financing, such as the Taltson project. Even if a project is self-financing and is owned by the Government of the Northwest Territories, it goes against its borrowing limit. So we are shackled right now by this borrowing limit that is in place.

Another example is the road to Tuktoyaktuk, which the previous Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development thought was a great project. He put money into the feasibility work that was going on, which got the project up to a point where it could go to an environmental assessment. It is a \$100 million investment to tie in Tuktoyaktuk with Inuvik. This would give us year-round access to the port of Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean, something that will assist in every fashion with the development of the north.

Where is the money going to come from for this? How can the Government of the Northwest Territories make arrangements with the federal government on shared projects or work together with other interests to create these projects without available fiscal capacity when it needs it?

There are many more examples, such as the need to upgrade the Liard Highway, at about \$50 million, in order to bring tourists into Nahanni National Park. This government supported its expansion two years ago, but we need to improve access into the area in order to make that world heritage site available to Canadians and create a tourist opportunity greater than we have today.

Through these vital infrastructure projects and many others, the Northwest Territories will be able to begin developing its full potential.

Infrastructure is important, but we also need to look at our communities. Many communities need infrastructure in order to provide a comparable standard of living with other communities across this great nation. We want that for our communities. We need to invest in our communities to make that possible.

These are some of the fundamental reasons we want to see a change in the borrowing limit. We need the money. We need the opportunity and fiscal capacity for our government to be able to do this.

Why should we trust this government?

The negotiators for the Government of the Northwest Territories and Canada have recommended the acceptance of a draft agreement in principle that would transfer administration and control of lands and resources from Canada to the Northwest Territories. We call that "devolution". There is much work to be done on this yet. There are many parties in the Northwest Territories that have to come together on this agreement, no doubt. However, this is the closest we have come in a very long time to getting an agreement.

Once devolution is complete, the people of the Northwest Territories will become masters in their homeland to a greater extent than before, and to an extent that is almost similar to that of the provinces. But to reap the benefits of devolution, we need to invest in our territory. This is not going to happen without that investment. My bill provides a vital tool to achieve that.

The first line of the AIP says:

WHEREAS, to enhance the ability of the Government of the Northwest Territories to serve the interests of its constituents

That is my reason as well for bringing forward this bill. It is not in the interest of the people of the Northwest Territories to have to have its government come forward on regular intervals to beg Ottawa for an increase in the amount it has to borrow. This is not responsible government. This is not the kind of relationship that we want to have with Ottawa. This is not the way that Canadians should be treated in this land today.

On March 26 of this year, Moody's Investors Service gave the Northwest Territories an Aa1 rating. This rating is the second highest, and in terms of credit risk, it places the NWT in line with most of the provinces, and in fact higher than many of the provinces. This is the second year in a row that Moody's has issued the NWT such a high rating.

● (1800)

Moody's rating takes into account recent developments related to the Deh Cho Bridge project. So a project that was somewhat controversial is under this rating. The credit opinion notes that

Private Members' Business

Moody's had already included the Deh Cho Bridge liability in its calculations of the NWT's net direct and indirect debt, reflecting the government's debt-like obligation to make periodic availability payments. As such, formal assumption of the related debt is not expected to alter the NWT's credit profile in a material way.

According to Moody's, the rating reflects:

prudent fiscal policies that have, over the past several years, limited debt accumulation. A well-developed fiscal framework (including a Fiscal Responsibility Policy which guides the NWT's fiscal policies and use of debt) should help to ensure that the debt burden remains low and affordable.

The NWT's fiscal responsibility policy mandates how the NWT may borrow. The policy guides NWT's fiscal policies and use of debt and includes guidelines respecting the type of activities for which debt can be issued, as well as limits on total debt and debt-servicing costs to ensure affordability.

What a remarkable thing for a small territory to do.

Under this policy, affordable debt is considered the level of debt where the corresponding annual debt servicing payments do not exceed 5% of total annual revenues. Infrastructure debt has to be paid off within 20 years. Debt for self-liquidating investments will be repaid from new revenues such as user fees, tolls, or expenditure savings. Debt incurred to finance repayable loan programs will be repaid from cash generated from the loan repayments and corresponding interest revenue.

Our territory is responsible. It is acting in a manner that many other provinces should emulate. Yet, at the same time, we do not have the fiscal capacity to do the things that we need to do for our territory.

I hope that Parliament will join with me in giving the Northwest Territories the tools it needs to build a strong and beautiful part of Canada.

In the words of the Hon. Floyd Roland when he was minister of finance:

This borrowing limit flies in the face of the principle of territorial political autonomy. It reflects an outdated and unreasonable view that we cannot make sound financial decisions on our own.

My bill would bring an end to this outdated and unreasonable situation.

● (1805)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Western Arctic, who is someone I know well from across the aisle here. I have served with him on a number of parliamentary committees, including Canada-Japan, and he does a fine job there.

However, I am a little confused about the private member's bill that he brought forward. We do not always get a time slot to do so, so I would think one would be particular about what one would bring forward.

Private Members' Business

I agree with him that development of the north is very important. However, I am not sure if he understands that the Government of Canada is now discussing these particular issues with all three territorial governments, the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Those discussions are ongoing and include the issue of borrowing levels.

So my question for the mover of this private member's bill is, who in his territorial government has he spoken to about this issue, and has he received agreement from them? Am I missing something that he knows about this issue that we do not know and that the government is not already doing?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I have had numerous discussions with the Premier of the Northwest Territories and the finance minister of the Northwest Territories on this very subject. In fact, on CBC Radio this morning, the finance minister indicated that he thought what I was going ahead with was a good idea because it would actually provide a legal framework for changing the legislation that guides the borrowing limit. If the government wants to review the borrowing limit, what a good time to do that.

However, what we want out of this is legislation changed so that the borrowing limit truly is put in stone, so that as the government grows larger and we take on more responsibility and our gross revenues increase, we will have an orderly progression in the size of our debt. These are things that are useful.

If the member thinks this Parliament is not here to discuss this type of issue, then I think he is missing the point. We do not want bureaucrats in the backrooms deciding how this is going to happen. This debate in Parliament lays it out clearly for all people to hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague and I will have a chance to come back to that during my floor time. However, I am impressed and I would like my colleague to talk about revenues.

I take a close look at all bills that are introduced, especially those relating to Indian affairs and northern development, because I am the Bloc Québécois critic for that portfolio. I was surprised to learn that the Northwest Territories' 2010-11 budget was \$1.357 billion. That is more than many countries, yet they have to come to Ottawa for authorization to borrow money.

That does not make sense. Can my colleague explain?

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is a creature of this Parliament. It was formed under the Northwest Territories Act. Within the NWT Act, there is a clear paragraph outlining that any debt that the Government of the Northwest Territories wants to take on has to come through an order in council.

It is the same for the Yukon and for Nunavut. However, with the Northwest Territories, we have right now the opportunity to do much more in terms of developing our economy. We need to invest in the economy. We need to move forward. It is time to take this step away from the colonialism that is evident with the NWT Act and move toward responsible government.

This is part of our evolution. It is a small part. It is a small issue but a very significant one right now and I trust that parliamentarians can get behind this and support it, because it will build a better Canada, a Canada that speaks to the rights of every Canadian, to equality in their legislative assemblies and the rights of responsible government.

• (1810)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for the opportunity to speak against this disappointing NDP proposal.

Before addressing the specifics of this proposal, let me reiterate our Conservative government's strong support for the Northwest Territories as well as the other territories.

Federal support for the territories is at an all time high. For the territories, this totals almost \$3 billion in 2010-11, an increase of a whopping \$766 million from the previous Liberal government. This is helping to ensure the territories can provide essential public services, such as health care and education. In the words of the finance minister of the Northwest Territories, Michael Miltenberger, this commitment of long-term growing support has provided "much needed relief".

Additionally, as part of our overall northern strategy, we have taken numerous other measures. For instance, to help offset the higher cost of living in the north we have increased the northern residents deduction by 10%, representing nearly \$10 million in annual tax relief for northern residents. This was a much welcomed move.

Yellowknife Mayor Gord Van Tighem heralded it as "something we've been asking for for a significant period of time. The move will mean more spending into local economies and further reduce the cost of living".

Inexplicably, the NDP member for Western Arctic voted against it and deeply disappointed his constituents.

Quoting from an editorial in the *Yellowknifer*, it states:

—a boost for the Northern Residents Tax Deduction...It is not a whole lot is a whole lot more than previous Liberal governments ever gave. Despite enormous budget surpluses and the voice of a...the Liberals never lifted a finger to increase the tax deduction, even after years of steadily rising costs...it would have been best had [the member for Western Arctic] swallowed the pill and voted with the government.

Unfortunately, that pattern of disappointment among northerners has continued with the NDP's last minute support to keep the long gun registry and, here today, with a poorly thought out NDP proposal.

Let me be clear from the outset. Our Conservative government respects territorial governments, especially on matters that directly impact them, like their borrowing limits. We are already actively working and consulting with all three territories about their borrowing limits.

Earlier this year we initiated a review of the operation of the territorial borrowing limits with all three territorial governments. This review will ensure consistency in the accounting or debt instruments between the borrowing limit and the territorial government's own public accounts, as well as ensure territorial governments are clear about their authority and can make appropriate decisions about their borrowing. Moreover, we are focusing on the borrowing limits of all three territories, not just one. We are actively engaging all three territorial governments.

This NDP proposal would effectively toss aside this consultation process and impose a solution that territorial governments would have no involvement in crafting. As such, we fundamentally believe that such an issue should only come from a consultation process and a careful review and government to government dialogue.

There is a long tradition in Canada of federal-territorial matters like this being discussed directly between governments. It would be grossly inappropriate to push this tradition aside, pushing aside territorial governments on matters that directly affect them and dictate to the territories through a private member's bill considered only in the federal Parliament in far away Ottawa.

While the NDP may disagree, we believe it is important to be sensitive and to be engaged directly with the concerns of all three territories. That is why we are working collaboratively with their governments in the current review, and we will continue to do so in the future.

To that end, our government strongly believes the review currently under way and the spirit of our collaborative work with all three territorial governments should be allowed to continue. This is a sign of respect.

● (1815)

On the other hand, to unilaterally impose a new borrowing limit on a territorial government without even consulting it, as this flawed NDP proposal would do, is not a sign of respect. That has been demonstrated in the extremely muted and skeptical reaction we have seen to this proposal since it was first introduced last June.

For instance, I note that Northwest Territories Finance Minister Miltenberger has not endorsed this proposal publicly. Likewise, other regional politicians, like Deh Cho councillor Tom Wilson, have even publicly voiced caution about it. Let me pause here to provide a bit of background.

First, through the Northwest Territories Act, the NWT government is required to have its borrowing approved by the Governor-in-Council. Similar provisions are included in both the Nunavut Act and the Yukon Act. Each territory is free to borrow up to the total borrowing limit established. I should note the federal government does not review individual territorial borrowing decisions within the limit. Such decisions are the territorial government's alone to make.

This existing framework sets fixed borrowing limits for each territory to operate within, providing them with certainty about their authority to borrow and the development of their fiscal plans. I underline once again that this is a framework that applies to all three territories equally.

Private Members' Business

This unsound NDP proposal we are dealing with today, on the other hand, would give one territory preferential treatment, completely ignoring both Yukon and Nunavut. Our Conservative government understands all territories should be considered equally when speaking of borrowing limits, which the NDP proposal clearly does not.

Another problem with this faulty NDP proposal is that it would tie the borrowing limit of the Northwest Territories to total estimated revenues. However, total estimated or projected revenues can and do change significantly, even from year to year. This is especially true for resource-based territorial economies.

While territorial governments are accustomed to this variation, this troubling NDP proposal would unilaterally expand the consequences of this variation for territorial decision makers and their borrowing. This would not be helpful. What is more, it is not even feasible.

For example, how would this estimated revenue number used to calculate territorial borrowing limits be generated? What information would be used? When is the estimate to be done and by whom? Does the federal government have to review this information? Does it have to agree with it? How will the Auditor General review it to ensure that it is transparent? The NDP proposal provides zero answers to any of those key questions.

For the information of parliamentarians, let me remind them how limits are currently set. A territorial government's own economic and fiscal outlook, chiefly the revenues from the economic activity within each of the territory's borders, forms a primary consideration. This is an objective and a prudent way to establish borrowing limits as it reflects the actual economic reality of the territories themselves.

On the contrary, this misjudged NDP proposal would not make revenues from economic activity within a territory the chief consideration. Rather, it would create an artificially elevated combination of territorial tax revenues along with various federal government supports, both temporary and permanent. This would include territorial formula financing, support for health care and even one-time initiatives.

In summary, the NDP proposal would unilaterally impose an unworkable, uncertain and unequal framework on the territorial government's borrowing authority. This is not in the best interest. The territories would and should be opposed.

What is more, our Conservative government has already undertaken a more responsible and respectful course of action by working with all three territorial governments to review the borrowing limits collaboratively.

● (1820)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise to speak to the bill. I have a lot more to say now that the Conservatives have spoken to it. What they have said about it is shocking.

Private Members' Business

There are 13 jurisdictions in Canada, 10 provinces and 3 territories, where people govern themselves in a great nation. They are responsible for their own actions. They are responsible for their own legislation and for governing themselves on a number of matters, except those of national importance. Why would anyone be opposed to a bill that would give more of that authority, more equality to those 13 regions, to treat them as responsible governments?

That is why I fought hard to get the devolution agreement for Yukon through Parliament. Yukoners wanted to have the decision making in their territory, just as people in all provinces do. People in Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador are no more capable of making decisions about their future than are the people in the Northwest Territories or, indeed, Yukon and Nunavut. We should treat these as mature and responsible governments, and not be paternalistic toward them.

The way the system works now, unlike the provinces which go into debt, the territories need to have a limit set by Ottawa, an arbitrary limit set by cabinet, which I believe at the moment for the Northwest Territories is \$500 million, and that could change. It depends on the particular cabinet. As the member said, it was a long, protracted process to make that change, which is obviously quite a hindrance on the government of the Northwest Territories.

The bill would take it from an arbitrary decision of cabinet to a specific percentage of their revenue to the amount they want to borrow. It is 70% of their revenues, which is a very modest amount of debt. It is far less, be it a third or a quarter, proportionately, than the deficit of the present federal government, which has the biggest deficit in history, and the huge debt the Conservatives have assisted in accumulating.

Until 10 minutes ago, of all the consultation I did, I had not heard a single complaint about the bill. No one could possibly think of a reason as to why we would not improve the system for the government of the Northwest Territories.

I want to describe a scenario of the Northwest Territories, because the 40,000 or 50,000 people who are watching may not know what it is like there. They may not know some of the conditions that the government of the Northwest Territories has to deal with, has to govern and why the need loan financing. It is a huge area, bigger than Europe with very few taxpayers and a lot less infrastructure than there is in southern Canada. A lot of communities are not accessible by road. The airports need upgrading and there are no harbours. It is very hard to access, to develop and to govern. It is also very expensive to provide health care. The Northwest Territories needs a government with good resources and the capability to at times get loans, which would be much more modest than those of the federal government.

There is great wealth in the Northwest Territories, but people have to access that wealth. Therefore, the territories need money for infrastructure which is very expensive. The few people who live there could not afford that infrastructure. Once they can access that wealth, then they can reduce their dependency on taxpayers in southern Canada, because they would be creating more revenues for themselves and for Canada from the development of those resources.

There are first nations governments there, the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in, the Sahtu, the Tlicho. They already have land claim agreements or self-government agreements. They have sufficient areas of land, but they need access as well to that land and could certainly be helped in some cases.

• (1825)

Nahanni National Park was a good example of tourism access to a wonderful site. There are some mines in the far north at the Arctic Ocean that could certainly be opened if they had road and port access. In the Northwest Territories, because there are no roads, development has to be done by ice roads. Many mines cannot open because they do not have power. That could be provided through loans by the GNWT to its energy agency.

The Mackenzie Valley highway would increase tourism not only there but in my riding, as well as supporting the development the member talked about. Put on top of this a new change, climate change, which adds a dramatic and huge cost to the Northwest Territories government because the ice roads that used to be used and the ice bridges that they need to do development are melting earlier, are less reliable, so they have to come up with solutions for that. It is causing mines to flood and building foundations to shift, and roads and sewers are all affected as the permafrost melts. There is a huge cost for adaptations.

The reason I was so disappointed in the government's speech was that it asked why now, when there are ongoing discussions on these issues with the GNWT. Perhaps if it were another government we would not go ahead with this. We might wait for that. We will leave it up to the member. I am recommending we go to committee to hear the witnesses at this point. We are in support of it going to committee. We might not go ahead if we thought those things were going to be successful and guaranteed, just because a government member said the Conservatives were dealing with it, but it does not follow what has happened in the past.

The Prime Minister promised he would never tax income trusts. What happened? They were taxed. He promised three armed icebreakers for the north. Where are they? He promised on national TV a port for Iqaluit. Where is it? If we could believe the government's word on these things in the north, then that would be a fine process. Hopefully the Conservatives do come up with something so that this bill is not necessary, but my understanding is that this will be another way for the member to ensure this needed change gets done.

Private Members' Business

The parliamentary secretary talked about resource revenues dramatically changing so that this would not work. He should perhaps try giving more of those resource revenues to the Government of the Northwest Territories because if it were getting them then it would have a dramatic effect, but it is not getting those resource revenues.

The member said it would treat the three territories differently. If we did not allow the three territories to be treated differently, we would not have a devolution agreement in the Yukon, which makes it virtually most of the powers of a province, totally different from the other two territories. My understanding from talking to those governments is they actually have different levels of borrowing powers at the moment. So that is a totally uninformed suggestion.

With regard to the conditions that the parliamentary secretary suggested that the Conservatives needed to know to set these limits, imagine telling the government of Quebec that it would have to give us this and this and we will tell it how much it can borrow. That is ridiculously paternalistic. The current government has the largest debt and deficit in the history of Canada. It is far more than the borrowing that is asked for by this responsible Government of the Northwest Territories. It is not an unreasonable quest to send the bill to committee.

I was going to be totally positive in this speech until I heard the ridiculous comments by the government. We should stop being paternalistic. There are 13 jurisdictions in Canada that have responsible government. They should be provided with the tools they need to deal with that. If they use this debt level, which is a very low, modest level, they have to pay it back. It does not cost the Government of Canada anything. I am all in favour and supportive of treating the people in the three territories as the responsible governments they have shown they can be and that they deserve to have.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if you remember, but I believe you were chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development when we first started talking about a study on the economic development of the north and on the constraints and difficulties that entails. We are just finalizing that study, which began almost two years ago. Like the hon. member for Yukon, I admit I was extremely surprised at the reaction of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance to the request from the New Democratic member for Western Arctic, a request that seemed perfectly legitimate to us.

The advantage of private members' bills is that they require us to do some research, to analyze and try to understand the problem. There is a difference between a government bill and a private members' bill. A private members' bill is introduced to solve a problem to the satisfaction of the party concerned.

In the Bloc Québécois, when we read Bill C-530 for the first time, we wondered what it was all about. We did not know this problem existed. We now realize that one of the main challenges involved in the economic development of the north is the fact that the inhabitants of that region are not autonomous. They cannot develop and have a vision for the future without the government's permission.

It is pure paternalism. Have we had gone back to the days of colonialism? The state steps in and tells the people how to develop the region. It says it cannot lend them a lot of money and that it will wait and see. If we want these territories, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, to take control of their own destiny, then we have to at least give them the chance to develop. One way to do so is to increase their borrowing capacity.

Let us draw a parallel. We have a credit card that we pay off on time every month. The bank or financial institution that issued the card writes to us after six months to say that, because the balance has always been paid, our credit will be increased. It is done automatically.

In a modern society, companies write to us to increase our lines of credit. That is usually what happens. Not only do the Northwest Territories pay their debts, but they also even have a small surplus at the end of the year. In the 2010-11 budget, their projected surplus is \$35 million. Their projected income is \$1.357 billion and their projected expenditures are \$1.293 billion. If that is not an administration that respects itself, takes responsibility and looks after its own development, then I do not know what is.

In short, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of sending this bill to committee to be studied.

● (1835)

I would very much like the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance to come to the committee to repeat what he said today. I do not think he would dare do so. It is not possible. It is paternalism in the extreme. How can—I was going to say nation, and I will say it—a nation, a territory like the Northwest Territories develop? They have mines. I looked into that because that forces us to work. We have worked. We have done our homework. They have not done their homework. It is clear that the parliamentary secretary has not done his homework.

We just have to look at the expansion plans for the Taltson hydro project. A power plant like that produces electricity. Of course to build it, money must be borrowed. We thought about our own dams in James Bay, in Quebec. We borrowed money to build them, but we have since seen a return on our investment. The Taltson power plant was explained to us. It is a run-of-the-river hydroelectric plant. It uses water that flows through the river. This hydro development on the Taltson River could replace 114 million litres of diesel and 320 kilotonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. Now I understand why the Conservatives oppose the bill. They might no longer be able to sell their oil in the north. If that is why, they should say so. Imagine that. When we hear things like that and read things like that, it does not make sense.

The purpose of the bill is to promote the economic development of Canada's north. The Northwest Territories want development. They want to stop having to come to Ottawa to beg the government, under section 20, for the opportunity to borrow a little more. They will be able to pay it back, but they have to ask permission from their grandfather, their big brother, their great-uncle or someone in Ottawa. I hope this government will understand. That is not the way to develop these lands.

Private Members' Business

If we want Yukon to address this issue, we need to do exactly what the member for Yukon said in the House. If the Northwest Territories want to develop, they need to do something about it. We will answer questions. We will go to committee. We will bring witnesses forward. We understand that anything can happen, but we cannot refuse and say that we do not want to hear anything about it from the outset. I think that this is an interesting bill. It allows us to put a finger on one of the major problems of economic development in the North. One of the problems that has been mentioned by nearly everyone in the North, including people in the Northwest Territories, is that no one is capable of long-term planning. This bill, if it is passed, will allow them to develop.

We have studied this bill. We said it today and we will say it again. We hope that this bill will go to committee. With all due respect for my colleagues in the governing party, I hope that they will not come before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development with the same opinion that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance expressed today because they will find their hour before the committee to be very long.

That is why we will make sure this bill is studied in committee.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Western Arctic for his work on Bill C-530. He is also an extremely hard-working and determined member of Parliament and the citizens of Western Arctic are getting extremely good value re-electing him time after time as their member of Parliament.

I was very surprised by the speech of the government member. He is normally a very restrained and thoughtful speaker but today he is out of character. It demonstrates that the government has run up the white flag on this bill. I think it can see that the three opposition parties will be voting together and will have sufficient votes to send it to committee and well it should be because it is a very well constructed and very good bill.

The parliamentary secretary fails to understand his role and the government's role in Parliament. The fact is that the Canadian government or any government for that matter in the parliamentary system survives at the pleasure of Parliament. The parliamentary secretary has one vote in the House as the member for Western Arctic does. This Parliament is a sovereign body. The parliamentary secretary has no right to berate any member of the House for simply doing his or her job. That is what the member was doing.

I was very impressed with the speech by the member for Yukon. He rightly came to the defence of the member to put the government in its place and make the government understand what its role really is.

The member for Yukon pointed out that there is a devolution agreement already in place for Yukon. It separates it from the other territories to a certain degree because there is a different level of authority between one territory and another.

Another issue that we need to deal with is that we are at second reading of the bill. Second reading of any bill is to deal with the principle of the bill. We are not supposed to be spending our time in

our speeches going through the minutia of the bill and discussing it clause by clause and point by point. The whole reason for second reading debate is whether or not members agree or disagree with the principle behind the bill.

That is why I argue many times in my own caucus that on second reading if we agree with the principle then we should be supporting the bill. I think, by and large, more often than not we should be voting together in Parliament to support bills at second reading if we agree with the principle.

What the government has done tonight is to simply to say that it does not even agree with the principle. We just had the Prime Minister a few months ago go up to the Arctic and talk about Arctic sovereignty and how we need to spend gazillions of dollars there to keep the Russians at bay and all the other enemies that he sees out there at bay because we want to be able to extend our arguments for sovereignty over minerals and oil exploration as far north as we can.

That is what the bill would do. The bill would facilitate our goal of extending our sovereignty in this country. That is another reason that I am very surprised and disappointed at the parliamentary secretary's response to the bill. The bill does not ask for a lot. It asks that a territory to be able to extend its borrowing capacity.

• (1845)

I want to reference something the member pointed out in his speech, which is that on March 26, Moody's Investors Services gave the Northwest Territories a AA1 rating, which is the second highest rating and places the Northwest Territories in line for credit risk with most of the provinces. This is the second year in a row that Moody's has issued the Northwest Territories such a high rating.

I know how important Moody's Investors Services and all these rating agencies are. These are world-class rating agencies. They rate securities, bonds and governments.

I was a member of the legislature in Manitoba for 23 years and before that I worked as an executive assistant to a minister in the Ed Schreyer government, which was elected first in 1969. Finance ministers of all provinces care a lot about Moody's and the other financial houses in terms of their ratings. They routinely get on a plane two or three times a year and go cap in hand to New York to be interviewed by representatives of these investment houses in order to get that all important good credit rating. They know that if their credit rating slips, the borrowing costs will be a lot more and it could mean a lot of money. This is very good news that the Northwest Territories has the capacity to get a credit rating like this.

The other issue concerns what it is borrowing. Is the federal government somehow lending the money, putting up the money and guaranteeing the money? The member has explained how the territory has always paid its bills and operates very fiscally responsibly. We would wish that the government would do the same.

There is another issue that the territories might look at, if this bill is successful. I think it will be successful with the Bloc, the Liberals and the NDP voting for it. It is just a matter of time before we actually get this bill passed. However, there are a lot of creative financing possibilities and opportunities that jurisdictions and provinces can take upon themselves. I will give an example.

Adjournment Proceedings

Twenty years ago, in 1986 in Manitoba, the government looked at selling bonds. Some of our backbench MLAs, one of them in particular, one of my former colleagues, suggested in the caucus that we sell Manitoba government bonds, that we sell Manitoba Hydro bonds. Guess what? Two years later, Manitoba Hydro was issuing its own bonds to citizens of Manitoba.

Does that not make a lot more sense than borrowing money in New York or on the foreign market, or perhaps even with a foreign exchange and other currencies? We have all been burned on currency exchanges over the years by borrowing in Swiss francs, Dutch guilders or German marks. What we did, which is what other provinces have done, was take out the bond right in Manitoba. We had Manitobans buying our bonds and keeping the money in the province. The interest on the bonds was staying in the province.

I know, for example, that Air North airlines in the member for Yukon's riding is a big success story. It has its headquarters, its commissary and its flight crews in Whitehorse. It is a real asset to that community. Even its financing is very positive, as far as I am concerned, because it sells shares to people in Yukon.

When I was up there last year, I talked to a person who worked as a server in the local hotel. She is thrilled with Air North because she bought \$5,000 worth of shares, she gets one or two free flights a year, and she gets a return on her investment. That is the type of local investment that we want to encourage within our local jurisdictions, and that can be done. It is not the Conservative approach that everything needs to be done through Goldman Sachs and other financial houses on the advice of these houses on foreign markets.

• (1850)

The member who is on the finance committee may laugh about that, but there are many ways to raise funds. We are saying that if we give people a local stake in their enterprises, we will see a much more solid enterprise in the long term.

I have not even begun to go through the notes that I have with respect to this debate. The parliamentary secretary got me to respond the way I did. I really did not expect that kind of attitude from the government. As the member for the Bloc said, I sure hope the government does not have that attitude when the three opposition parties pass this bill on to committee where it belongs.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

COPYRIGHT

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to come back with a new

question for the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages.

On June 4, I asked a question about Bill C-32, introduced by the Minister of Industry on June 2. He answered my question himself. However, I was not at all satisfied with the answer, which made no sense. I will repeat my question and someone on the other side of the House will certainly be able to answer it. Here it is:

...there is no monetary compensation for artists in this bill. [In Bill C-32, there is no monetary compensation and previous levies have been taken out.] Sales of music CDs are in free fall and artists' revenues are slowly drying up. However, the appetite for music has not wavered [people have not stopped listening, and neither have I] and makers of MP3 players are still raking in huge profits. ADISQ, UDA [l'Union des artistes], the Canadian Private Copying Collective and even the Union des consommateurs are calling for a levy on digital music players [l'Union des consommateurs is an influential group].

Why is the government denying creators their fair remuneration?

Why has Bill C-32 eliminated all sources of compensation?

There are none left. The private copying levy—I will come back to that in a moment—amounts to \$180 billion paid to artists throughout Canada and Quebec over the past 15 years.

The Minister of Industry replied:

We want to help artists, but we also want to help consumers.

This bill is about copyright and the Minister of Industry replies that he wants to help consumers. After that, we saw him go off in all directions to help consumers. The Union des consommateurs does not support Bill C-32, but does support the private copying levy.

I would like to take a moment to explain what that kind of system involves. Artists receive levies from the sale of blank cassettes and CDs. Private copy levies are already in the act. Every time consumers buy a blank cassette or CD, they pay 29¢ to a collective society that redistributes the money to artists according to a complex but fair formula. Artists receive their fair share, which enables them to keep creating. Many artists go for months without earning any income because they are busy creating.

The Union des consommateurs agrees with the system and, in its September 2009 brief, suggested the following:

We therefore suggest extending Part VIII of the Copyright Act [the part that modernizes private copying] to devices such as digital audio recorders, digital video recorders including Tivo and other decoders with integrated hard drives, telephones with digital-capable memories, and DVDs.

That text appears on page 21 of the Union des consommateurs September 2009 brief.

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1855)

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say at the outset that I look forward to the member's support for Bill C-32. As somebody who wants to see the arts, culture and creative sector in Canada succeed, she knows that we need to modernize Canada's Copyright Act. I hope the member is going to support Bill C-32, a balanced modernization of the Copyright Act.

With respect to the copying levy, as she puts it, I think my party has taken a position that is very principled, one that suggests we are going to stand up for Canadian consumers. I know the Bloc does not understand what I am saying on this, so I am going to try to speak to it in a manner whereby it is well understood.

Thirty years ago when the transition was first made from vinyl records to cassette tapes, people often made copies on cassette tapes. Cassette tapes could be used for one thing and one thing only: audio recording. There was a system put in place whereby people who made copies of audio recordings paid a small fee, a tax, on the cassette tapes and that fee went to a collective. Many people did not even know they were paying it. I have a problem with that because most people did not know they were paying this tax to begin with, but it did go to a collective.

As technology improved, people could write onto CDs. CDs, unlike cassette tapes, could also be used with computers, for storage of information, quite a bit more storage actually, and they could also be used to store photos. The connection between audio recordings and CDs started to get stretched, but there was a levy, or a tax, placed on blank CDs for all Canadians. People did not pay it in the United States or in a lot of competing jurisdictions, but Canadians were forced to pay it here. A lot of Canadians did not know that.

The device I have on my hip is a telephone, but I can surf the Internet, send emails and take pictures and video with it. Unfortunately, perhaps I could also copy a song onto it. What the Bloc and the NDP propose is that we put an additional tax on devices like this, even Canadian-made devices like the one I am proud to own, which is made by a company in Waterloo. That does not make any sense. Nobody agrees that this makes any sense.

I suggest that I accompany the member to her riding and ask her constituents these simple questions: Are they prepared to pay more money for their iPod, laptop, cell phone or home computer? Are they prepared to pay more money which will go to a collective, which will come up with a formula to redistribute money? Or would they rather have a system that works, a market-based system? That is what Bill C-32 does. It re-establishes the market.

The member was in committee when she heard representatives of the Canadian recording industry say, "You want to give us pennies when what we really need is a market system that works, one that allows us to get paid for the music and albums we are producing". That is what Bill C-32 delivers and the member should support it.

•(1900)

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, music is not free. Musical works belong to the artists, and that is why we have copyright

legislation. I know that copyright is an English word that means "the right to copy", but in French, and it is the French-language principle that I am defending, we talk about *droit des auteurs* or "the right of the authors". I hope that the interpreters do not laugh at my English.

We need to remember that in any given year, about \$10 million is distributed to artists. If we do not modernize the private copying system, we will no longer have a need for copyright legislation, since there will be no more authors. Music is not free. We must compensate our authors. We must pay for what we use.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I agree that music should not be free. Artists should be compensated. That is why we want to re-establish a market-based system whereby we can actually protect people's rights so that when they have a product, they can sell it and get paid.

Once again, the member is saying, "We understand people are going to steal music, so let us just charge them a couple of bucks up front, maybe as much as \$80 on an iPod", which is the iTax we keep describing. She is saying, "Let us just charge the iTax and we will allow them to steal music". I do not accept that. The Canadian recording industry does not accept that. The member does not have a single person from the cultural industry, not one, who is telling her not to support copyright modernization.

The member can hold out on this issue if she wants. The bottom line is that we are going to stand up for consumers and we are going to stand up for artists.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I raised a question in the House a while back about child and maternal health for first nations, Métis and Inuit. It is no surprise that I did not find the answer to be adequate.

I am referring to a report from April 2009 of the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health and the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence. They have ably outlined the many problems with aboriginal maternal and child health in this country. I only have a couple of minutes, so I will only touch on a couple of points. They made 14 recommendations. I want to mention a couple of these recommendations before I get to some of the data.

One of the recommendations was that an analysis be conducted as to the budget actually spent on the direct front-line delivery of aboriginal maternal and infant health programming, distinguishing federal program administration costs from what actually reaches the community.

Adjournment Proceedings

They also recommended that incentives be investigated for retaining and recruiting trained workers in the communities; that they move to multi-year arrangements and more streamlined application reporting procedures; that they develop a matrix for gauging cultural success in their proposals based on criteria that the communities themselves determine; that Jordan's principle be implemented by all levels of government and that it be heralded as a best practice in child-centred care; and that a best practice be to move aboriginal midwifery forward toward the repatriation of birthing to aboriginal communities.

Those recommendations were based on very detailed research. What they did find was that the data in aboriginal communities is inadequate and incomplete. Their fear was that there is a real risk of understating and thus underserving the true need for maternal and child health programs.

I want to cite a couple of statistics. They say, for example, that the life expectancy of the Métis is unknown as are rates for infant mortality, low birth weight and types of cancers. They go on to say that the health issues and concerns of Métis communities, and in particular Métis women, have largely been ignored in health research and data policy and implementation.

They also say that although there is better health data for aboriginal infants, it is dated. Even in that dated material which goes back 10 years, the differences in live births for aboriginal versus non-aboriginal are significant. It is 8.0 per 1,000 live births compared to 5.5 per 1,000 live births for Canada as a whole. There are many more statistics in the report.

The final frightening statistic is that the rate of death from injuries is four times greater for aboriginal infants, and among preschoolers the rate is five times greater.

I ask the parliamentary secretary, how many of these recommendations that were put forward are actually being considered and being implemented? What are the costs associated with the implementation of some of these recommendations?

• (1905)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that the health and safety of all Canadians is important to our government. We are committed to improving health outcomes for first nations and the Inuit. We recognize that strategic investments in maternal and child health lead to greatly improved long-term health outcomes, which is why we will continue to work with our partners to support maternal and child health programs in first nations and Inuit communities.

Budget 2010 has demonstrated our government's ongoing commitment to improving aboriginal health outcomes by investing \$285 million over two years. This investment will be put towards aboriginal health programs in the areas of diabetes, suicide prevention, health human resources, the aboriginal health transition fund, and maternal and child health.

Our government supports a range of programs and services that promote improved health outcomes for first nations and Inuit children and their families. These initiatives support healthy pregnancies, healthy births and healthy child development.

Through these programs, the Government of Canada is helping to address factors that impact maternal and infant mortality in first nations and Inuit communities by promoting healthy behaviours such as smoking cessation, increasing access to quality prenatal care and regulated birth attendance, and providing information on maternal nutrition.

As well, through the maternal and child health program, the Government of Canada works to ensure that first nations women, children and families reach their fullest developmental and lifetime potential.

Specific services through the maternal and child health program include home visits by nurses and family visitors for first nations pregnant women and families with infants and young children, to provide follow-up, referrals and case management, as well as screening and assessment of pregnant women and new parents' access to the services they need.

In the north, the program enhances disease prevention and health promotion activities provided for Inuit communities by the provincial and territorial governments.

We have also initiated activities to improve maternal and infant nutritional health care through the Canada prenatal nutrition program, including breastfeeding promotion and support, nutritional screening, education and counselling, and maternal nourishment.

The first nations and Inuit component of the Canada prenatal nutrition program has an annual budget of \$14 million and currently reaches over 9,000 first nations and Inuit women per year at approximately 450 project sites, which serve more than 600 communities.

Health Canada is also investing \$16 million annually to prevent fetal alcohol spectrum disorder births and to improve health outcomes for those affected in first nations communities.

Our government also monitors maternal and infant health through the Canadian perinatal surveillance system. Through this system we work with leading experts from across the country to analyze and report on women's health in pregnancy and childbirth.

In the north, we are supporting the Government of Nunavut in its responsibility to provide health services to all territorial residents, including those for new mothers and children.

The territorial health system sustainability initiative is a five-year, \$150 million program that supports territorial health system reforms and offsets medical travel expenses in the three territories.

Adjournment Proceedings

My colleague asked about midwifery. Budget 2010 confirmed a two-year, \$60 million extension of the territorial health system sustainability initiative to provide the opportunity for territorial governments to continue building upon the successes realized over the first five years. As part of the initiative, Nunavut dedicated substantial resources to expand community midwifery services and modernize its midwifery act.

Our government is committed to helping first nations and Inuit leaders, partners and stakeholders to ensure access to quality health programs for infants, children and families in all first nations and Inuit communities.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his answer, but in this 2009 report there were still some serious gaps in any number of programs. I do not have time to list them all, but some are the Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve, Brighter Futures, the Canadian prenatal nutrition program, the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder program, maternal child health, the targeted immunization strategy, and on and on.

One step that the government could take that would signal its intention to put children first is to fully implement Jordan's Principle, which was passed unanimously in this House of Commons. That was one of the recommendations of this report. It said that Jordan's Principle should be implemented by all levels of government and that it be heralded as a best practice in child-centred care.

If we truly believe that first nations, Métis and Inuit children should come first, when will the government implement Jordan's Principle fully?

• (1910)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, the difference between our government and the NDP is that we are committed to working with the stakeholders and our partners in the first nations community.

Budget 2010 has demonstrated this government's ongoing commitment to improving aboriginal health outcomes with an investment of \$285 million over two years to renew aboriginal health programs in the areas of diabetes, suicide prevention, health human resources, the aboriginal transition fund, and maternal and child health.

The sad thing is that the NDP voted against all these initiatives.

Health Canada is helping to address the factors that have an impact on maternal and infant mortality in first nations and Inuit communities, by supporting programs that aim to promote healthy behaviour such as smoking cessation, increased access to quality prenatal care and regulated birth attendance, and providing information on maternal nutrition.

Health Canada will continue to work with partners and stakeholders on maternal and child health programs in first nations and Inuit communities to reduce the gaps in maternal and infant mortality rates between first nations and the Inuit and the general population.

We hope that the NDP gets behind these initiatives instead of constantly voting against all the good initiatives that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:11 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Wednesday, November 3, 2010

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Municipal Elections	
Mr. MacKenzie	5747
Human Rights	
Mr. Dhaliwal	5747
Saguenay Fjord	
Mr. Bouchard	5747
Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy	
Mr. Cullen	5747
The Learning Partnership	
Mr. Kerr	5748
Canadian Forces	
Mr. Wilfert	5748
Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program	
Mr. Goldring	5748
Jean-Charles Bonenfant Foundation	
Ms. Deschamps	5748
National 4-H Month	
Mr. Dreshen	5748
Iraq	
Ms. Folco	5749
National Seniors Safety Week	
Mrs. O'Neill-Gordon	5749
Woman Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month	
Ms. Mathysen	5749
Protection of Children	
Mrs. Glover	5749
Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Francophones	
Mr. Nadeau	5750
Media Literacy Week	
Mr. Trudeau	5750
Immigration	
Mr. McColeman	5750

ORAL QUESTIONS

Potash Industry	
Mr. Ignatieff	5750
Mr. Harper	5750
Mr. Ignatieff	5750
Mr. Harper	5750
Mr. Ignatieff	5751
Mr. Harper	5751
The Environment	
Mr. Ignatieff	5751
Mr. Harper	5751

National Defence	
Mr. Ignatieff	5751
Mr. Harper	5751
Securities Industry	
Mr. Duceppe	5751
Mr. Harper	5751
Mr. Duceppe	5751
Mr. Harper	5751
Harmonized Sales Tax	
Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	5752
Mr. Flaherty	5752
Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	5752
Mr. Flaherty	5752
Potash Industry	
Mr. Layton	5752
Mr. Harper	5752
Mr. Layton	5752
Mr. Harper	5752
Mr. Layton	5752
Mr. Harper	5752
Government Spending	
Mr. Brison	5753
Mr. Flaherty	5753
Mr. Brison	5753
Mr. Flaherty	5753
Government Priorities	
Mrs. Crombie	5753
Ms. Finley	5753
Mrs. Crombie	5753
Ms. Finley	5753
Hydroelectricity	
Ms. Brunelle	5753
Mr. Flaherty	5754
Ms. Brunelle	5754
Mr. Flaherty	5754
International Trade	
Mr. Laforest	5754
Mr. Van Loan	5754
Mr. Laforest	5754
Mr. Van Loan	5754
Office of the Prime Minister	
Mr. Proulx	5754
Mr. Baird	5754
Mr. Proulx	5754
Mr. Baird	5755
Mr. Easter	5755
Mr. Baird	5755
Mr. Easter	5755
Mr. Baird	5755

Citizenship and Immigration

Mr. Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country).....	5755
Mr. Kenney.....	5755

Harmonized Sales Tax

Ms. Davies (Vancouver East).....	5755
Mr. Flaherty.....	5755
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East).....	5755
Mr. Baird.....	5756

Quebec City Arena

Mr. Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord).....	5756
Ms. Verner.....	5756
Mr. Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord).....	5756
Ms. Verner.....	5756

Government Spending

Ms. Coady.....	5756
Mr. Day.....	5756
Ms. Coady.....	5756
Mr. Baird.....	5756

Mining Industry

Mr. Gravelle.....	5756
Mr. Clement.....	5757
Mr. Angus.....	5757
Mr. Clement.....	5757

Trade

Mr. Richardson.....	5757
Mr. Van Loan.....	5757

Telecommunications

Mr. Rota.....	5757
Mr. Clement.....	5757

Immigration

Mr. St-Cyr.....	5757
Mr. Kenney.....	5758

Steel Industry

Ms. Charlton.....	5758
Mr. Clement.....	5758

Copyright

Mr. Brown (Barrie).....	5758
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam).....	5758

Telecommunications

Mr. Rota.....	5758
Mr. Clement.....	5758

Presence in Gallery

The Speaker.....	5758
------------------	------

Points of Order**Oral Questions**

Mr. Volpe.....	5759
Mr. Van Loan.....	5759

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**Government Performance Reports**

Mr. Day.....	5759
--------------	------

Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lukiwski.....	5759
-------------------	------

Veterans

Mr. Blackburn.....	5759
Mr. Ignatieff.....	5760
Mr. André.....	5761
Mr. Stoffer.....	5761

Committees of the House**Industry, Science and Technology**

Mr. Sweet.....	5762
----------------	------

Status of Women

Ms. Fry.....	5762
--------------	------

Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Ms. Hoepfner.....	5762
-------------------	------

Foreign Affairs and International Development

Mr. Allison.....	5762
------------------	------

Justice and Human Rights

Mr. Fast.....	5762
---------------	------

Parliament of Canada Act

Mr. Atamanenko.....	5762
Bill C-589. Introduction and first reading.....	5762
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed).....	5763

Petitions**Employment Insurance**

Mr. Andrews.....	5763
------------------	------

Seniors

Mr. Lessard.....	5763
------------------	------

Veterans

Ms. Mathysen.....	5763
-------------------	------

Aboriginal Affairs

Ms. Mathysen.....	5763
-------------------	------

Right to Life

Mr. Fast.....	5764
---------------	------

Air Canada

Mr. Desnoyers.....	5764
--------------------	------

Animal Welfare

Mr. Atamanenko.....	5764
---------------------	------

Aboriginal affairs

Mr. Asselin.....	5764
------------------	------

Animal Welfare

Mr. Hyer.....	5764
---------------	------

Housing

Mr. Hyer.....	5764
---------------	------

Veterans Charter

Mr. Nadeau.....	5764
-----------------	------

Passport Fees

Mr. Maloway.....	5764
------------------	------

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lukiwski.....	5765
-------------------	------

Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lukiwski	5765

Motions for Papers	
Mr. Lukiwski	5767

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Sustaining Canada's Economic Recovery Act	
Bill C-47. Second reading	5768
Mrs. Crombie	5768
Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	5769
Mr. McKay	5770
Mr. Cuzner	5770
Ms. Ashton	5770
Mr. Regan	5771
Mr. Easter	5772
Mr. Easter	5772
Ms. Sgro	5773
Mr. Regan	5774
Ms. Sgro	5774
Mr. McKay	5775
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj	5776
Mr. Regan	5776
Mr. Easter	5777
Division on motion deferred	5778
Copyright Modernization Act	
Bill C-32. Second reading	5778

Mr. Rodriguez	5778
Mr. Maloway	5780
Mr. Tonks	5780
Mr. Thibeault	5781
Mr. Thibeault	5781

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Northwest Territories Act	
Mr. Bevington	5784
Bill C-530. Second reading	5784
Mr. Wallace	5785
Mr. Lemay	5786
Mr. Menzies	5786
Mr. Bagnell	5787
Mr. Lemay	5789
Mr. Maloway	5790

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Copyright	
Mrs. Lavallée	5791
Mr. Del Mastro	5792
Aboriginal Affairs	
Ms. Crowder	5792
Mr. Carrie	5793

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